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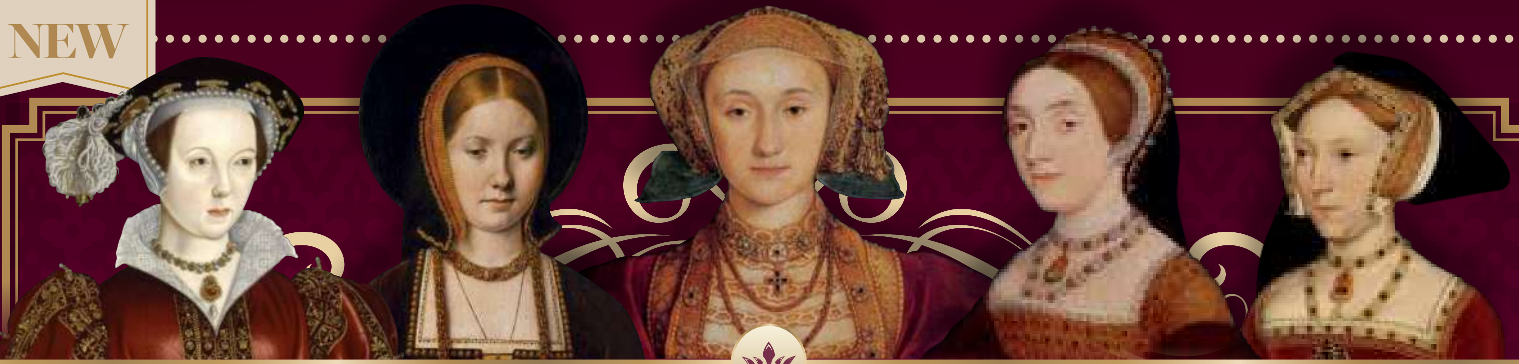
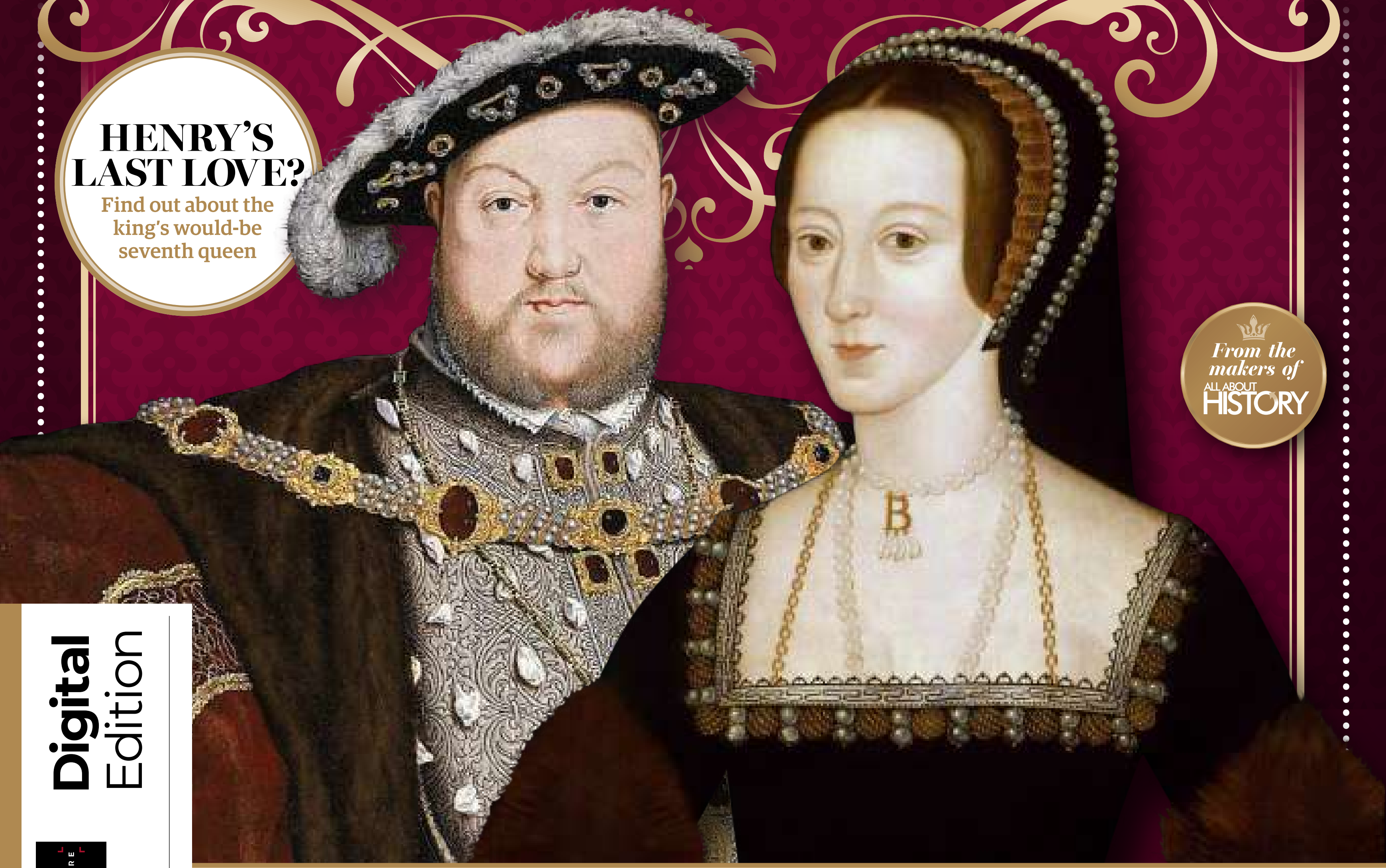


ANNE BOLEYN
AND THE
SIX WIVES

At the Tudor court, lust & ambition could lead to fatal consequences...



HENRY'S LAST LOVE?
Find out about the king's would-be seventh queen

From the makers of ALL ABOUT HISTORY

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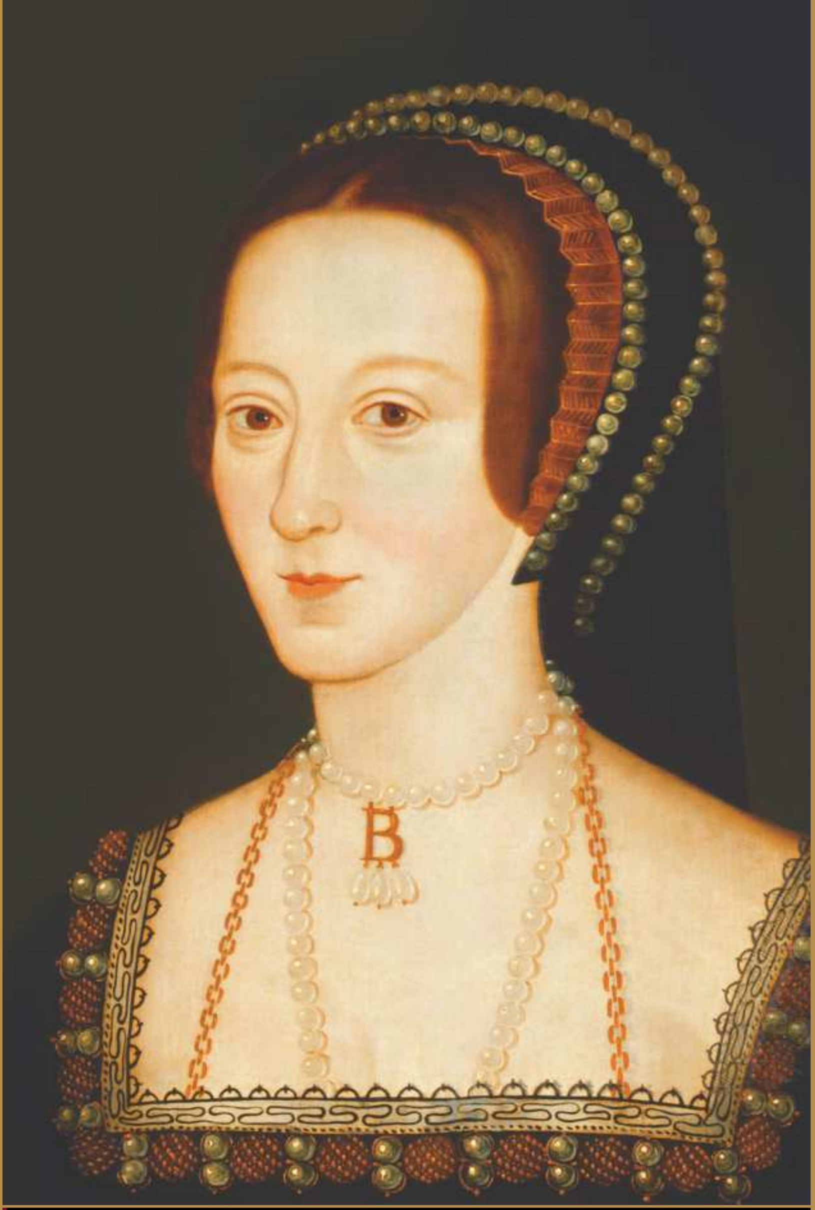

WELCOME TO ANNE BOLEYN AND THE SIX WIVES

As the swordsman of Calais sunk his blade into the tender flesh of Anne Boleyn's neck, her head tumbled from her body and her life met its very tragic end. Her unexpected execution shocked the Tudor court – after all, only years before an infatuated King Henry VIII had revolutionised the Church in order to marry his young mistress, tearing apart a nation and abandoning a wife and daughter in the process. So what led to the terrible downfall of England's reviled queen, and what fate did the king's other five wives face?

In Anne Boleyn and the Six Wives, meet the women who captured the womanising king's heart, from the devoted and pious Catherine of Aragon to the shrewd Catherine Parr. Over the following pages, find out why Henry considered Jane Seymour to be his 'true wife', delve into the short-lived marriage of Henry and Anne of Cleves, and learn how Catherine Howard met her pitiful demise. Elsewhere, uncover the story of the woman rumoured to be lined up as the seventh wife, and explore the legacy of England's six queens, from the Tudor succession crisis to the Protestant Reformation.

FUTURE

ANNE BOLEYN AND THE SIX WIVES

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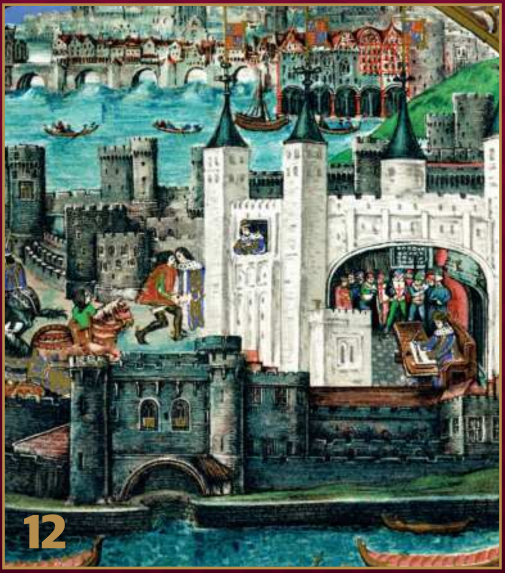
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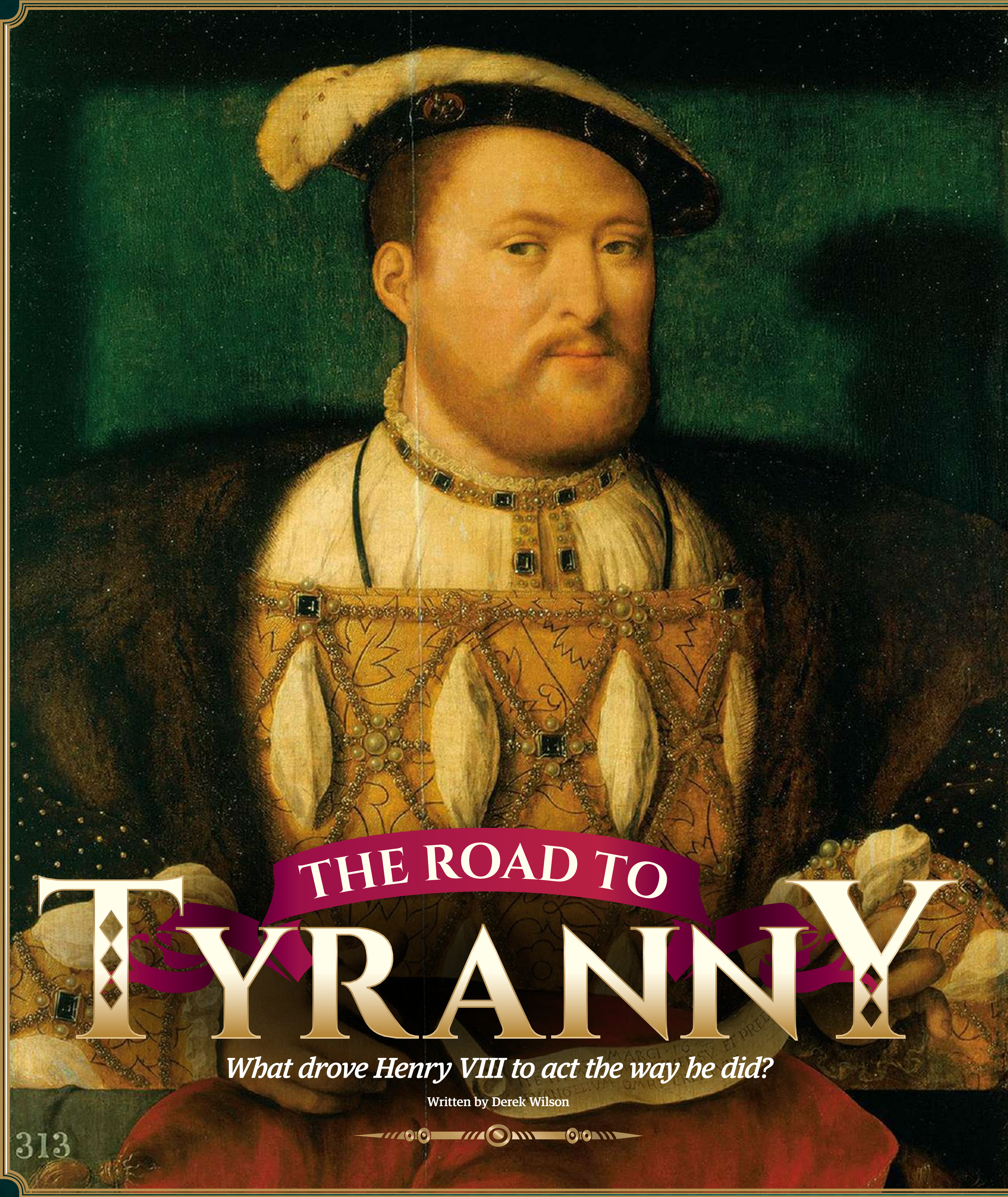
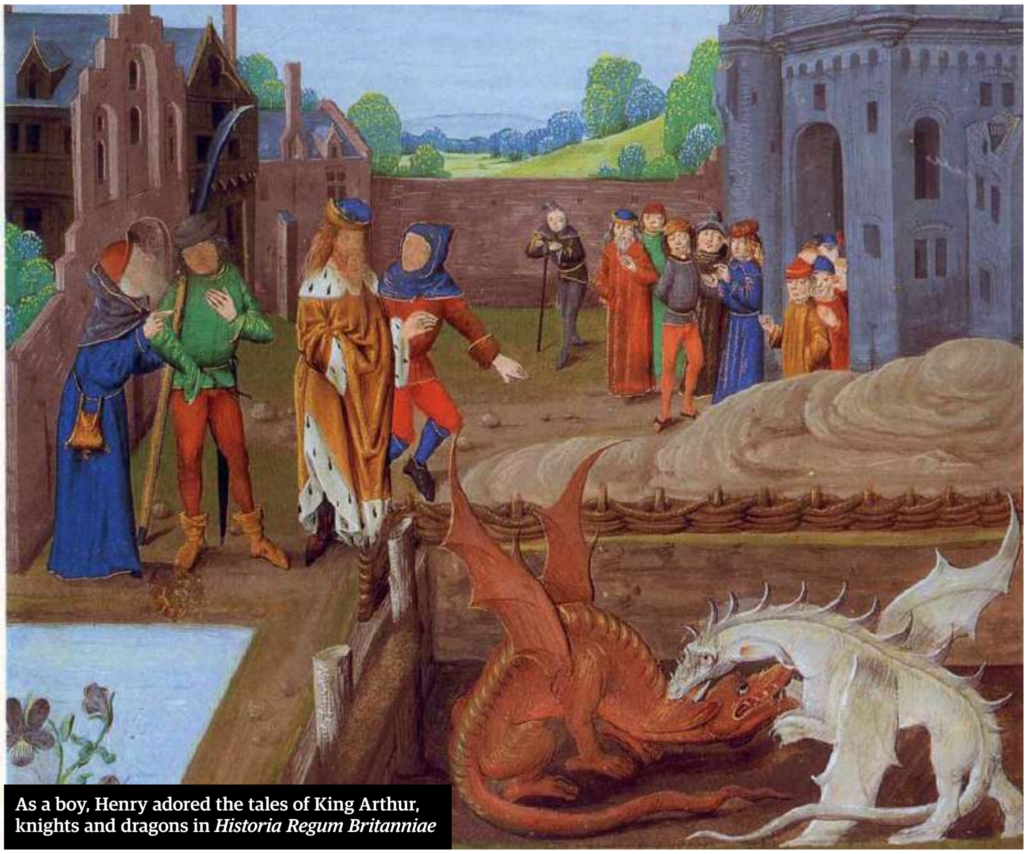


THE ROAD TO TYRANNY

What drove Henry VIII to act the way he did?

Written by Derek Wilson



As a boy, Henry adored the tales of King Arthur, knights and dragons in *Historia Regum Britanniae*

'Politics is the art of the possible.' So, according to legend, Otto von Bismarck, the great pragmatist, observed. This holds true, whether one is talking about a 21st-century elected head of state or a 16th-century dictator. It is not just modern party leaders who embrace populism in their pursuit of power. Even the most ruthless autocrat needs to calculate what he can get away with; needs to persuade the people that what he or she wants is for the common good. History is replete with examples of rulers who have pushed their luck too far - and paid the price. Henry VIII has gone down to posterity as arguably England's worst tyrant - the man who forced momentous changes on his country largely in his own interests. Yet even he could not afford to treat public opinion with total disdain. He had to maintain the support of the more powerful landed magnates and he had to 'manage' those institutions - church and parliament - that represented the majority of his subjects. In seeking to understand his remarkable success we can identify three factors that, in addition to his monumental egoism, played their part: financial security, brilliant advisers and sheer good fortune. To see how these played out, let us take a brief overview of the reign.

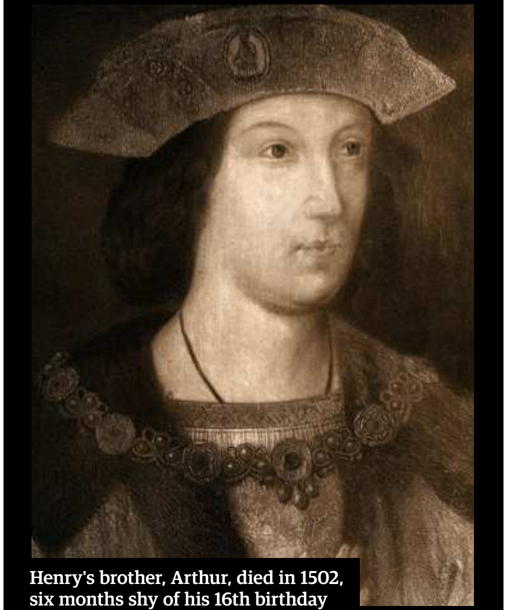
When his father, Henry VII, won the crown at the Battle of Bosworth and established the Tudor dynasty, most of his subjects could remember the decades of warfare that had plagued the realm, as supporters of the houses of Lancaster and York vied for power. The new king still had to face the challenge of rival claimants and his people were threatened with the continuation of disruptive conflict. There was a desire for peace and stability and these were provided by the astute first Tudor. But they came at a price. Henry VII established a regime of ruthless efficiency. His bureaucracy insinuated itself into the lives of his wealthier subjects in quest of novel ways of augmenting the royal treasury. He took the initiative in encouraging trade and he operated as an entrepreneur in his own right. All these measures put the Crown in a strong position financially - but were not all universally popular. Thus, when, in 1509 the old king died, mourning was distinctly muted. An up-and-coming lawyer, Thomas More, welcomed the change of regime in words that many echoed: "The nobility, long since at the mercy of the dregs of the population... whose title has too long been without meaning, now lifts its head, now rejoices

> "HENRY FORCED MOMENTOUS CHANGES ON HIS COUNTRY LARGELY IN HIS OWN INTERESTS"

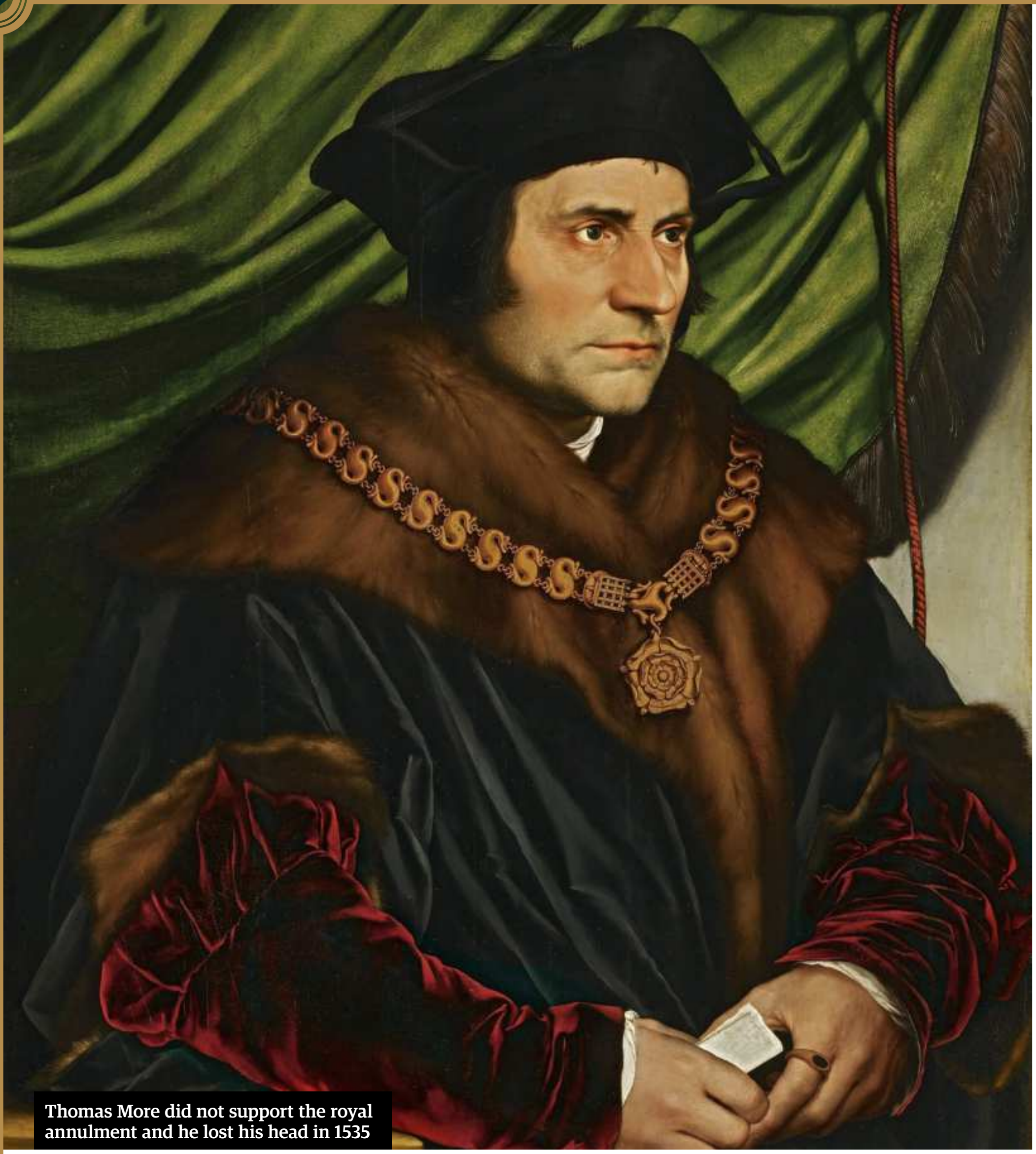
THE UNEXPECTED KING

Henry was far from prepared for life as a ruler

Traits of character developed in infancy remain strong, perhaps irreversible. Henry's training for kingship did not begin until after the death of his brother, and by then the young prince was nearly 11 years old. While Arthur received rigid training for his future role of King, his brother's regimen was more relaxed. Most of his time as an infant was spent in the company of his mother and sisters, who doted on him. As the only male in a female environment, he became a self-willed exhibitionist. Later, the boy was given his own 'court', young companions who shared his lessons and his games. Henry grew up muscular and athletic with a love of tiltyard sports. All this changed drastically when Arthur died, in 1502. His father took control of his new heir's daily routine, desperately trying to protect him from danger and unwholesome influence while belatedly instilling a sense of responsibility and political awareness. Access to the prince was strictly controlled. Participation in hazardous sports was severely restricted. According to the Spanish ambassador, Henry was "so subjected that he does not speak a word except in response to what the king asks him". The prince must have longed for the day when he would be his own master - it's easy to comprehend why, as king, he would resolutely and aggressively 'do his own thing'.



Henry's brother, Arthur, died in 1502, six months shy of his 16th birthday



Thomas More did not support the royal annulment and he lost his head in 1535

"If the Tudors were God's chosen rulers, how could he let the dynasty peter out?"

in such a king, and has proper reason for rejoicing. The merchant, heretofore deterred by numerous taxes now once again ploughs seas grown unfamiliar. Laws, heretofore powerless… now happily have regained their proper authority. All are equally happy. All weigh their earlier losses against the advantages to come."

The fund of goodwill young Henry VIII enjoyed was as well-stocked as the treasury now at his disposal. However, other aspects of his inheritance had not adequately prepared him – or the nation – for what was in store. When he came to the throne in 1509, he was just shy of his 18th birthday. Moreover, for the first 11 years of his life he'd had no expectation of succeeding his father. The death of Arthur, his elder brother, in 1502 made Henry heir to the throne and by that time his basic character traits had already been formed. He was an athletic, gregarious and fun-loving extrovert. His education had not focused on the responsibilities of kingship and when his father tried to impose a more stringent regimen the teenage prince did not take kindly to it. The young heir felt himself 'cabined, cribbed, confined' and could scarcely wait for his father's death.

He had his own vision of England's future. It was self-evident to him that the triumph of the Tudors signalled divine favour. God had chosen him, not only to bring peace and plenty to England, but to restore the glory of the realm. As a child, Henry's favourite reading had been the 12th-century *Historia Regum Britanniae*, which traced the English royal line back through Arthur to the heroes of Greece and Rome. He revelled in the tales of King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table, never doubting their historical accuracy. Such images fed into Henry VIII's vision of himself as king destined for glory who would be a major player in the affairs of the continent.

This explains one of the first decisions he made after coming to power – a decision that would prove to be fateful. His father had marked out for himself a position among the top political players in Europe. Negotiating a marriage alliance with the royal house of Spain, the most powerful western nation, was a real coup. He'd acquired as a bride for Arthur, Catherine, the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, joint rulers of Spain. Unfortunately, within months of the wedding Arthur was dead. This left Catherine 'stranded' at the English court. Unwilling to return the dowry he'd received from Ferdinand, Henry VII dithered over deciding his daughter-in-law's fate. His son displayed no such indecision. He declared his intention of marrying his brother's widow – and did so in a lavish ceremony within two months of his accession.

It all began well. The king and queen presided over a lively court where life was one long party. Occasionally they appeared in public at pageants, tourneys and ceremonial events designed to bond ruler and ruled. Henry singled out his father's chief ministers as scapegoats for the unjust policies of the previous reign and had them executed. It seemed that a fresh start really had begun.

However, for Henry's subjects, it took little time for the gilding of popular display to wear through to the base metal of everyday reality. As far as government policy was concerned, little had changed – effective tax gathering was still its cornerstone. In fact, royal extravagance added to the burdens of treasury officers. During his reign, Henry built literally dozens of royal residences as well as endowing projects such as Trinity College, Cambridge and spending hugely on castles and coastal defences made necessary by his aggressive foreign policy. As early as 1512 he was launching campaigns against Scotland and France and, even though he had to rein in his ambitions during the middle years of his reign, the 1540s saw a return to military activity that bankrupted the country. The costs were borne by the people – as they had been during Henry VII's reign.

But one monumental change had taken place since the second Tudor came to the throne – the ubiquitous printing press. By 1509 the revolutionary new technology was established in every major European city. The result was a quantum leap in the communication of ideas. Books, once the treasured possessions of scholars, were more widely available; some of them written in vernacular languages rather than the Latin of the well-educated minority. This created a demand for literacy among all classes. What ideas were now circulating among Europe's growing readership? The answer is a wide range of innovative concepts, many of which challenged conventional wisdom. Daring authors ventured to criticise the intellectual certainties that bolstered the authority of leaders in church and state. Of course, circumspect writers (including Thomas More, who had rapturously welcomed the new regime in 1509 but was less wholehearted many years later) veiled their criticisms in order to avoid trouble.

Did Henry pay any heed to pleas for reform? Well, yes and no. He was a cultured ruler and certainly aware of the challenges presented by avant-garde thinkers. He even appointed Thomas More as his Lord Chancellor in 1529. But he shunned the teachings of religious and social radicals – until it suited him to encourage them. His basic instinct was for stability. Therefore, we have to explain why it was that this king initiated some of the most profound changes in English history. To do so we must look to two interwoven factors: Henry's determination at all costs to preserve the Tudor dynasty and his choice of talented advisers.

His primary responsibility, as he saw it, was to sire a legitimate heir. Years passed and the only child borne by Queen Catherine to survive infancy was a daughter, Mary (born in 1516). Questions were raised then and since about Henry's sexual ability. He boasted of his virility and had at least two mistresses, yet he acknowledged only one illegitimate son and, despite his many royal wives, he sired only two legitimate children after the age of 27. This was a cause of genuine anxiety – and bewilderment. If the Tudors were God's chosen rulers, as Henry believed, how could he allow the dynasty to peter out? The answer that he stubbornly clung to was that his marriage to his brother's widow had been in breach of divine law and that the reigning pope was duty-bound to annul it. It was Clement VII's refusal to oblige that launched the sequence of events that severed England from Catholic Christendom.

But he couldn't engineer this monumental change alone. He needed skilled politicians to build the necessary legislative machinery. Henry was a good judge of character and the English Reformation was framed as much by his three senior advisers as by the king himself. Thomas Wolsey, a highly efficient administrator, served as Lord Chancellor from 1515 to 1529. Wolsey oversaw domestic and foreign policy, masterminded military expeditions, and tried to ensure that royal revenue kept pace with royal expenditure. He was successful until the marriage issue reared its head. Despite his best efforts he could not persuade Rome to accede to Henry's wishes, so was dismissed. His replacement (1529-1532), Thomas More, laboured under a distinct disadvantage; as a pious Catholic, he did not believe in the royal annulment. Specifically, he could not support the solution to his problem that Henry had adopted – that of declaring himself head, not only of the English state, but also of the English church. When Henry refused his advice, More resigned. His defiance cost him his head. This left the way clear for the remarkably talented Thomas Cromwell, whose conviction was as firm as his predecessor's. However, unlike More, he was a religious radical, prepared to let nothing stand in the way of reform. Under his guidance, parliament passed the necessary legislation for Henry to disembarrass himself of his first wife and marry his second. Cromwell also swept away the English monasteries, which were hotspots of papal support, and poured the confiscated wealth into the king's coffers. He went on to purge churches of religious images and to sponsor an official translation of the Bible.

Henry embellished what was thought to be King Arthur's original table with an image of himself

© Getty

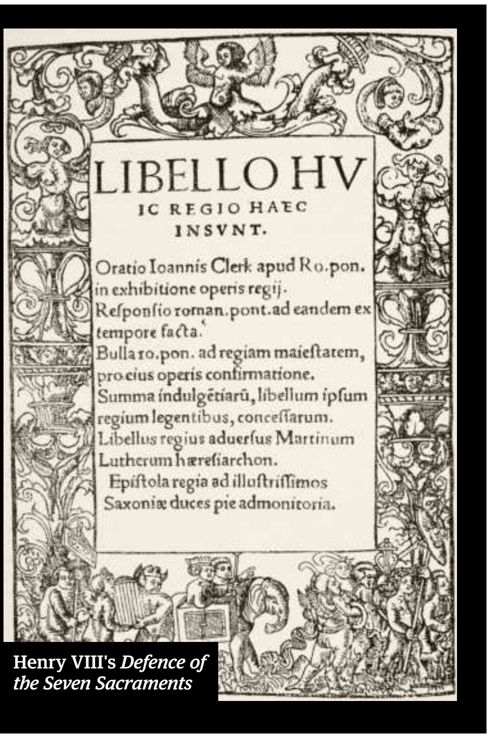
The result was a split of English society into Catholic and Protestant camps. A conservative rebellion, the Pilgrimage of Grace, had to be put down in 1537. Rival preachers launched tirades from their pulpits. And Henry? What did he believe? What leadership was he giving his people? The French ambassador, Charles de Marillac, reported to his master that official policy "is so often altered that it is different in the morning than after dinner".

However, as he neared his end in January 1547, the king believed that he had fulfilled his God-given destiny: one of his many wives had provided him with a legitimate male heir.

DEFENDER OF WHAT FAITH?

The good Catholic king went on to have a major change of heart

Henry VIII came to the throne as a Catholic king who, like his fellow monarchs in Europe, owed spiritual allegiance to the pope in Rome. However, in terms of practical politics, this involved very real tensions for all the rulers in Christendom. The popes were also temporal rulers who not only protected their territorial interests in Italy but involved themselves in the affairs of kings and emperors. It was their involvement in Henry's matrimonial problems that would lead to a serious and permanent breach. In 1521, that breach still lay in the future. Henry regarded himself as a good Catholic and wanted to be recognised as such. One way of achieving this was to make a bold stand against Martin Luther. He wanted to respond to the reformer's *95 Theses* with a written refutation but he lacked the patience and mental discipline for producing a theological treatise. When Luther attacked the Catholic sacramental system, by asserting that only two (baptism and holy communion) were instituted by Christ, Henry saw this as an opportunity to gain some international celebrity. With the aid of a team of English theologians he produced *Defence of the Seven Sacraments* and had a lavish copy presented to Leo X. The pope responded by granting Henry the title Fidei Defensor – Defender of the Faith. Thirteen years later he declared himself, not the pope, head of the church in England. But he kept the title.


LIBELLO HV
IC REGIO HAEC
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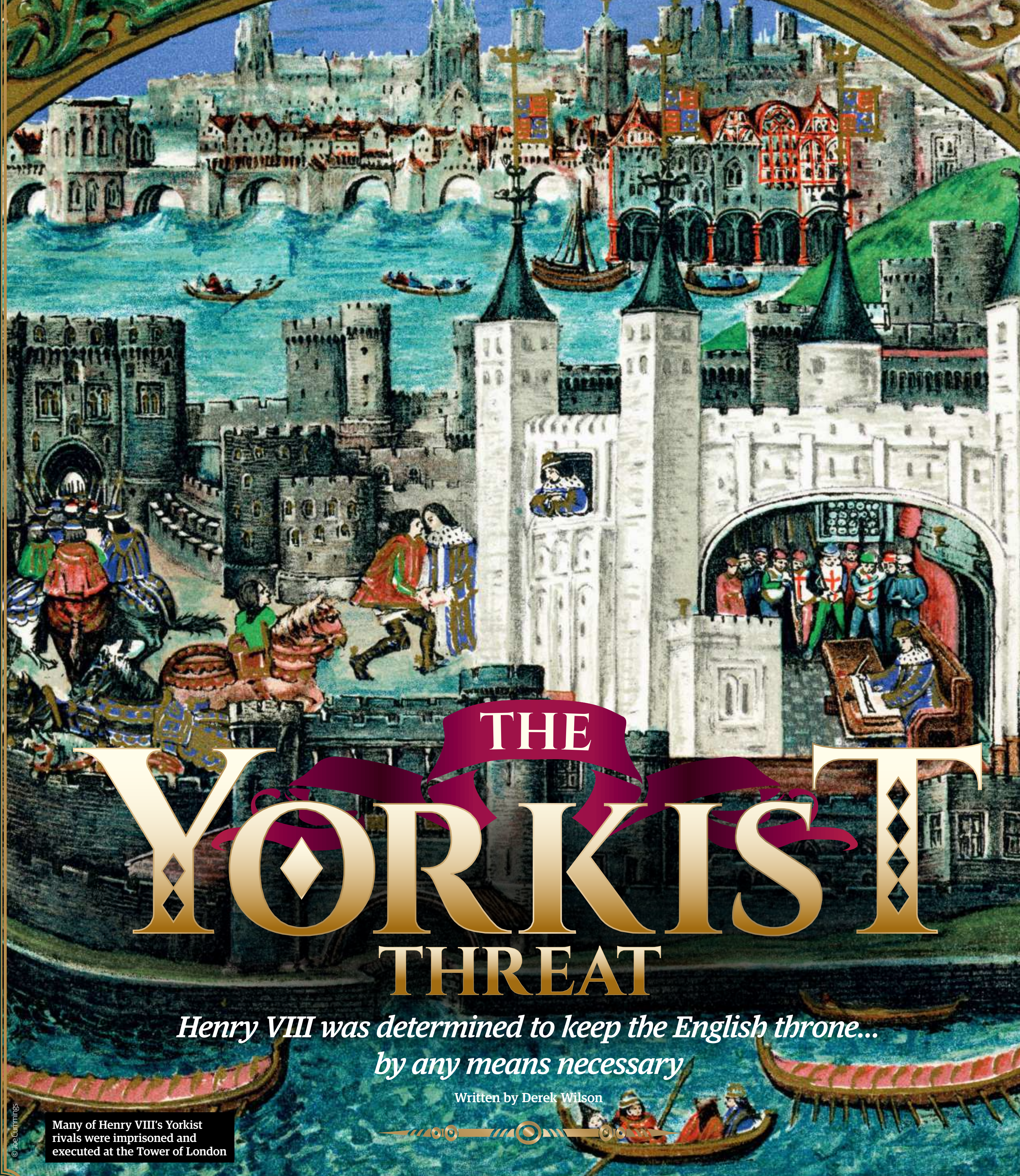
Oratio Ioannis Clerk apud Ro.pon.
in exhibitione operis regij.
Reſponſio roman.pont.ad eandem ex
tempore facta.
Bulla ro.pon. ad regiam maieſtatem,
pro eius operis confirmatione.
Summa indulgẽtiarũ, libellum ipſum
regium legentibus, conceſſarum.
Libellus regius aduerſus Martinum
Lutherum hæreſiarchon.
Epiſtola regia ad illuſtriſſimos
Saxoniæ duces pie admonitoria.

Henry VIII's *Defence of the Seven Sacraments*



THE YORKIST THREAT

Henry VIII was determined to keep the English throne… by any means necessary

Written by Derek Wilson

Many of Henry VIII's Yorkist rivals were imprisoned and executed at the Tower of London

© Joe Cummings

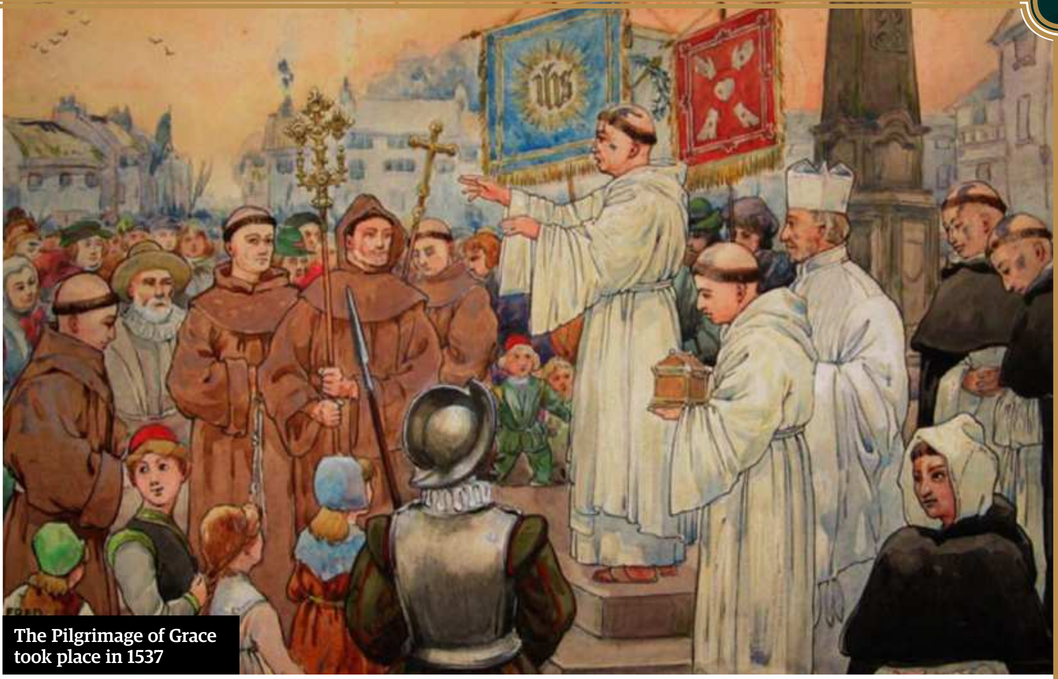
To the end of his days Henry VIII could not be sure that his dynasty was absolutely secure. "About the same time took place the lamentable execution of the Countess of Salisbury at the Tower, in the presence of the Lord Mayor and about 150 persons. When informed of her sentence, she found it very strange, not knowing her crime; but she walked to the space in front of the Tower where there was no scaffold, but only a small block. There she commended her soul to God, and desired those present to pray for the King, Queen, Prince and Princess."

Few, if any, English kings have been more guilty than Henry VIII of shedding innocent blood, but arguably none of his crimes was less excusable than the execution of the 67-year-old Margaret Pole, a lady who had never been guilty of treasonous intent. This appalling act does, however, bring home to us aspects of the politico-religious situation we might otherwise tend to underestimate.

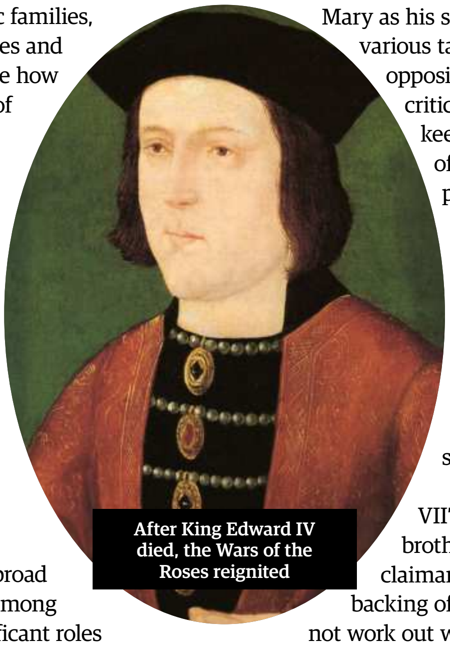
“HENRY VIII SENT AGENTS INTO THE SHIRES TO SPY ON THOSE WHOSE LOYALTY HE SUSPECTED”

The fact that the Tudor dynasty survived for well over a century and successfully saw off all threats against it can lure us into the assumption that after the Pilgrimage of Grace (1537) all opposition was at an end and that Henry VIII had secured peace and a measure of unity but we should not allow hindsight to play us false. Seismic tremors frequently disturbed the realm and threatened to erupt in revolt or even all-out war. Three elements combined, throughout the reign, to make the situation unstable - dynastic rivalry, religious conflict and international tension.

In the 15th century, the Wars of the Roses had, for several decades, divided the leading aristocratic families into rival Yorkist and Lancastrian camps. Henry VII had emerged victorious in 1485, united the rival parties by marrying Elizabeth of York and successfully seeing off attempts to place Yorkist pretenders on the throne. But, 50 years down the road, the Tudor dynasty still clung to power by a slender thread. In the spring of 1537, when the Pilgrimage of Grace collapsed, Henry VIII was still without a male heir to ensure the continuance of his line and the maintenance of his religious policy. It did not require great political acumen to foresee that, on Henry's death, there might well be a return to party strife and that the accession of Princess Mary, a devout Catholic, would see the end of England's brief spell as a 'Protestant' nation.

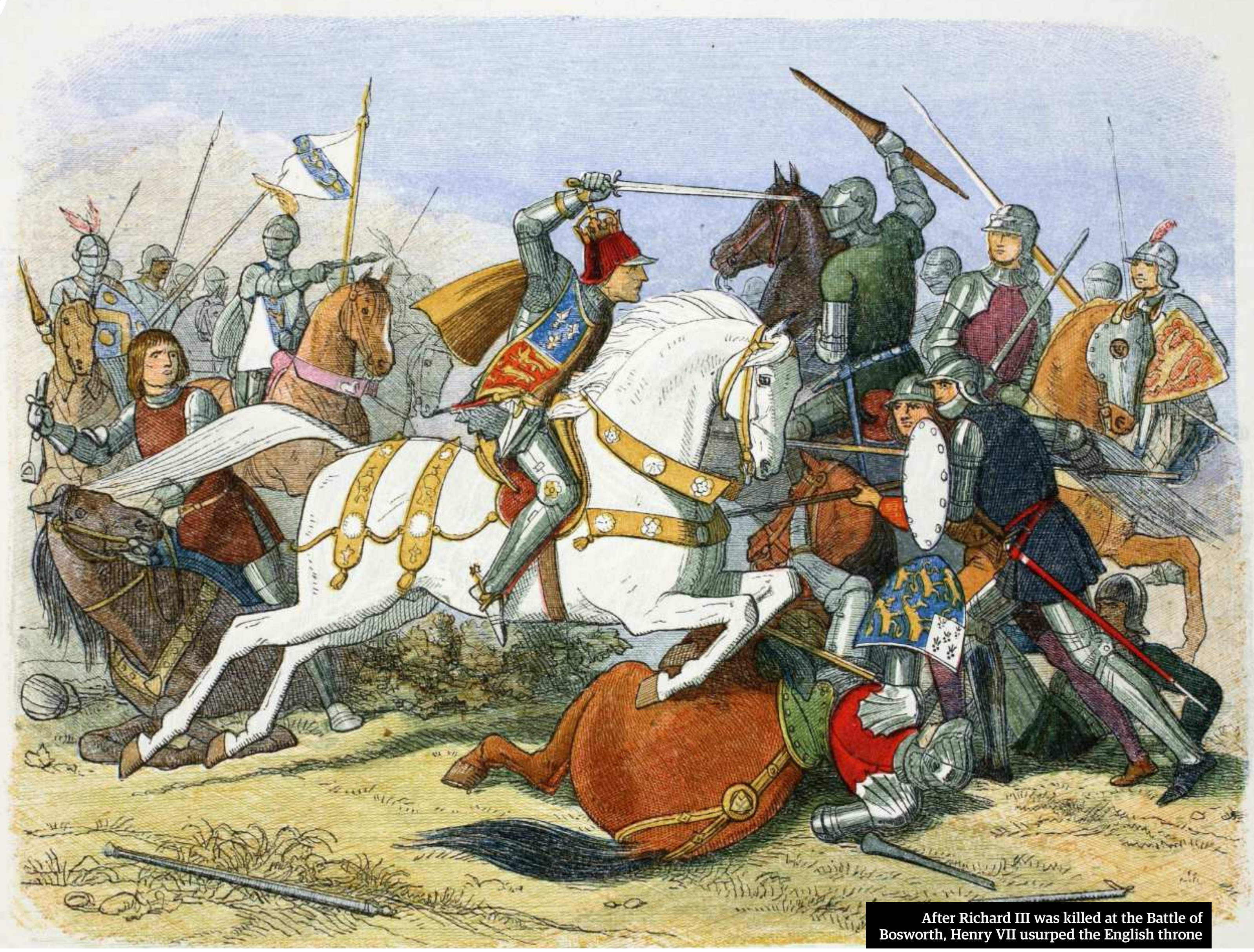

The Pilgrimage of Grace took place in 1537

Interested observers inside and outside the country kept a close watch on events. There was a network of aristocratic families, some with Yorkist sympathies and some merely watching to see how they might take advantage of a changing situation. Some of these clans had kinship links with the Tudors. Across the Channel the pope intrigued with the rulers of France and Spain in the hope of bringing about an invasion that would restore England to the Catholic fold. These forces did not operate independently of each other. Papal agents were active stirring discontent in various parts of England. English activists travelled abroad seeking powerful patrons. Among those destined to play significant roles in the political background of Tudor England were descendants of the Yorkist Edward IV and his siblings: Henry Courtenay, Marquess of Exeter (1496-1539); the brothers Edmund de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk (1471-1513) and Richard de la Pole (1480-1525); Margaret Pole, (not to be confused with de la Pole) Countess of Salisbury (1473-1541) and her sons, Henry, Baron Montagu (1492-1539), Sir Geoffrey (1502-1558) and Reginald (1500-1558); and Arthur Plantagenet, Viscount Lisle (1461-1542), an illegitimate son of Edward IV.


After King Edward IV died, the Wars of the Roses reignited

Such desperate malcontents motivated by clan loyalties and/or religious convictions never merged into a coherent movement capable of dislodging Henry VIII from his throne. But this did not mean that they'd gone away, nor that they had ceased to be a force to be reckoned with. The king knew as well as they that time was not on his side. When he died there would certainly be those who backed Catholic Mary as his successor. He deployed various tactics to undermine potential opposition: he kept some of his critics at court where he could keep an eye on them; he bought off some with titles, court positions or lands confiscated from the monasteries; he sent agents into the shires to spy on those whose loyalty he suspected; and there were those he imprisoned or executed. He even employed hit men to rid himself of those who could not be silenced by other means.

In the latter years of Henry VII's reign, the de la Pole brothers, the strongest Yorkist claimants, were abroad, seeking the backing of other rulers, but things did not work out well for them. In 1506, Philip I of Castile, Edmund's protector, was driven off course by adverse winds while travelling through the Channel, and was obliged to seek Henry VII's protection. The English king took advantage of this mishap to negotiate Edmund's deliverance into his hands. As soon as he arrived in his homeland, Edmund was conveyed to the Tower of London. He was still in captivity when Henry VII died. Henry VIII kept him a prisoner as a hostage to ensure the good behaviour of Richard de la Pole, who was still touring the Continent in



© Getty Images

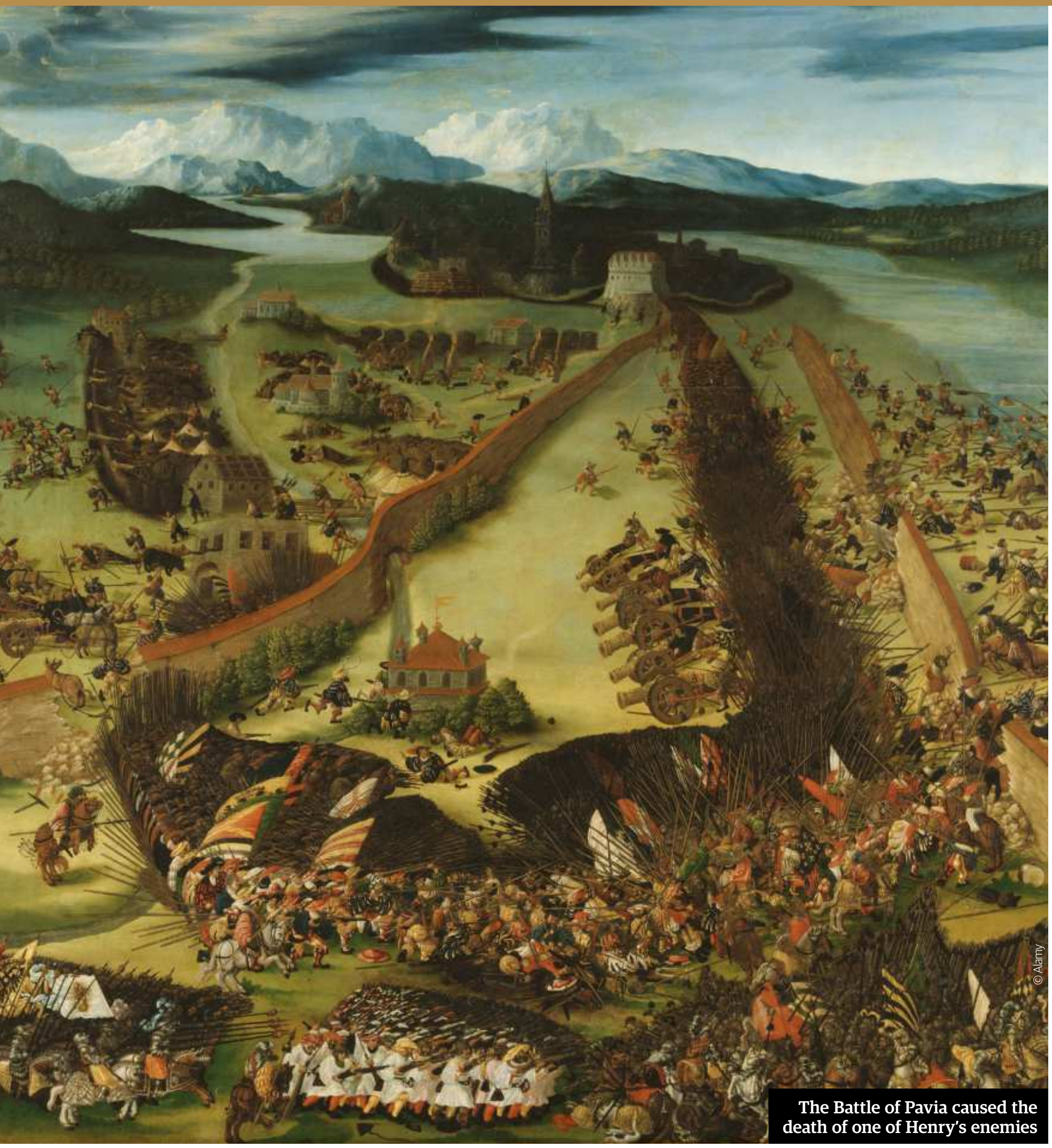
After Richard III was killed at the Battle of Bosworth, Henry VII usurped the English throne

> "HENRY KEPT EDMUND DE LA POLE AS A HOSTAGE TO ENSURE THE GOOD BEHAVIOUR OF HIS BROTHER"

search of a powerful patron. When Richard sold his sword to Francis I, the French king, Henry chose to regard this as a treasonous act, since England was currently at war with France, and took his revenge by summarily ordering Edmund's execution in 1513. For more than a decade Richard continued to lead the life of a soldier of fortune. Much to Henry VIII's delight, Richard died while fighting in the Battle of Pavia in 1525. On hearing the news, Henry is reputed to have responded, "At last the dynasty is secure." If he did express such a sentiment it was certainly premature.

Attention now switches to the Poles. They were brought into the circle of the royal court where, for some time, Margaret, Countess of Salisbury, was one of Queen Catherine's ladies-in-waiting and also attached to the household of the young Princess Mary. The family were in sympathy with Henry's first queen and her religion but were not overtly disloyal. They were caught between concern for their own advancement and the dictates of the heart. This was precisely what the king intended his leading families to feel: as long as they realised what side their bread was buttered on they were not likely to risk treasonous activity.

Henry could be generous with his displays of favour aimed at winning the support of those whose loyalty he needed. He showed particular favour to Reginald Pole, Margaret's third son, who eventually chose a career in the Church. The king paid for the young man's university education, at Oxford and later at Padua. Reginald was a considerable scholar and during extensive travels on the Continent he met several of the leading thinkers of the day. Henry expected that his protégé would exercise his influence with the academic community to endorse the official party line on the annulment of his first marriage. But Pole was gradually moving towards the contrary position and deliberately absenting himself from England. Other game players also recognised Pole's talents and family connections. The imperial ambassador, Eustace Chapuys,



© Alamy

The Battle of Pavia caused the death of one of Henry's enemies

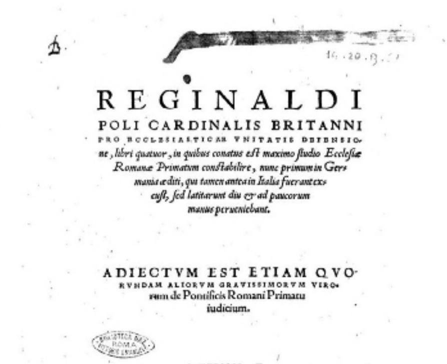
even went so far as to suggest that the young man might be married to Princess Mary, thus uniting, the Yorkist and Tudor lines and paving the way for reconciliation with Rome. Pope Paul III made Pole a cardinal and appointed him a legate to preside over negotiations to bring England back into the Catholic fold. As for Pole, he had, finally, made his position clear early in 1536 by sending his king a copy of his recently completed treatise, *Pro ecclesiasticae unitatis defensione*. This declared his rejection of the annulment and sought to unite pro-Catholic forces at home and abroad to reverse the Supremacy legislation. His timing could scarcely have been worse. Within months England's northern counties were ablaze with insurrection. Margaret Pole was appalled at her son's inept initiative. She wrote to castigate him for his folly which, apart from anything else, had potentially endangered her family. The rift was wide and probably permanent. Reginald let his siblings know, 'if I thought she was of the same opinion as others over there, mother though she is, I would tread upon her with my feet.'

Henry was beside himself with rage. Nothing angered him more than personal betrayal and he was now bent on revenge. He sent agents to interrogate members of the cardinal's family. Under pressure, Sir Geoffrey threw himself on the king's mercy and gave evidence against Lord Montagu and the Marquess of Exeter. It wasn't much information but it was enough to get the men and the Countess of Salisbury arrested. They were put on trial and found guilty of treason. For his loyalty to the Crown, Geoffrey was pardoned and released. Thus ended the so-called 'Exeter Conspiracy'. It had never amounted to very much and it played into the king's hands. He now had hostages at his mercy while he went in pursuit of Cardinal Pole. What followed was a cat-and-mouse game. Henry despatched minions to locate Reginald and gather evidence against him. Through diplomatic channels he tried to persuade King Francis I and the Emperor Charles V to apprehend the cardinal but neither was prepared to take action against the pope's envoy. When all else failed, Henry

THE BOOK THAT MADE HENRY VIII SEE RED

One religious treatise sealed the fate of many

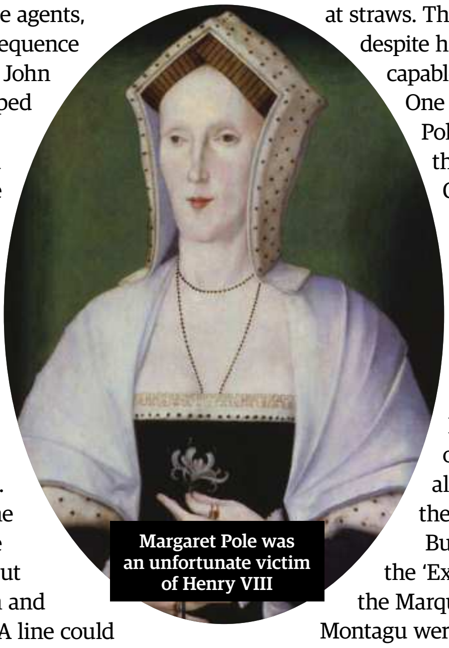
In 1530 Reginald Pole was well known and respected throughout Europe as a scholar and a theologian. That is why Henry VIII hoped for his cousin's support in his political and religious difficulties. His campaign to achieve the annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon was running into the sand and he needed Reginald's advocacy. He believed that he had every reason to expect his kinsman's help, for he had unstintingly furthered Pole's career. Now, he went further. He offered the massive bribe of appointing the 30-year-old layman Archbishop of York. Trembling in his boots, Pole declined. Henry went into a towering rage and drew his dagger, then stormed out of the room. Some four years later the king tried another approach. He ordered Pole to set down in writing his opinions on the matrimonial issue and the headship of the English church. In the resulting treatise, *Pro ecclesiasticae unitatis defensione* ('In Defence of the Unity of the Church'), the author pulled no punches. He asserted that the universal headship of the papacy was indispensable, that Henry was wrong to resist the Pope's judgment on the matrimonial issue, that he'd ruined the country 'for love of a harlot' and that, anyway, Henry had misunderstood the teaching of the Bible about the sin of marrying a brother's wife. Leviticus 20:21 related to proscription of the widespread practice of polygamy and not a man marrying his late brother's widow. Paul III did not help matters when, within months, he made Pole a cardinal.



REGINALDI
POLI CARDINALIS BRITANNI
PRO ECCLESIASTICAE VNITATIS DEFENSIONE,
libri quatuor, in quibus conatus eſt maximo ſtudio Eccleſiæ
Romanæ Primatum conſtabilire, nunc primum in Germaniæ
editi, qui tamen antea in Italia fuerant excuſi,
ſed latitarunt diu & ad paucorum
manus perueniebant.

ADIECTVM EST ETIAM QVORVNDAM ALIORVM GRAVISSIMORVM VIRORVM de Pontificis Romani Primatu
iudicium.

sent assassins to solve his problem once and for all. But Reginald was not without his own friends, servants and spies. The ensuing saga of pursuit and flight, of agents and double agents, bluff and counter-bluff was a sequence of events worthy of the pen of John le Carré. The cardinal sidestepped every attempt to entrap him. Even the offer of 100,000 gold pieces was not enough to have Pole delivered into his royal master's hands.


Margaret Pole was an unfortunate victim of Henry VIII

These adventures took place against the background of the Pilgrimage of Grace and its aftermath. By the spring of 1537 the rebellion had been suppressed. Events were now moving in the king's favour. Not only had the 'treacherous commons' been put down, but Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn were both dead. A line could be drawn under 'the King's Great Matter'. Henry had married again and the icing on his cake was the discovery, in the spring of 1537, that his new wife, Jane Seymour, was pregnant. He felt vindicated. After the traumas of the last 10 years he had emerged victorious. He was convinced (or had convinced himself) that he would now have his long-awaited heir. It is no coincidence that this was the time that he commissioned Hans Holbein to paint the life-size image for his privy chamber at Whitehall. It was a celebration of the dynasty. It proclaimed to all the important people privileged to enter this innermost space that the Tudors had 'arrived' and were here to stay. Yorkist hopefuls and their cronies could eat their hearts out. England's future was decided. It would be free from internal aristocratic rivalries and the interference of the pope.

In the event, matters did not turn out entirely as the king wished. In October, Edward, the longed-for prince of the blood royal, was born, but his mother did not long survive the perils of 16th century post-natal care. This misfortune allowed the enemies of the break with Rome a smidgeon of hope. They spread the rumour that the baby prince had also perished. It was a clutching at straws. The king was manifestly, despite his age and poor health, capable of siring more children. One thing that did cheer the Poles and their friends was the downfall of Thomas Cromwell. The seemingly impregnable minister fell foul of a court plot in the summer of 1540 and went to the block, but not before he had installed in the household of Prince Edward a coterie of New Learning men. The hopes of the reformers were kept alive. The future was still in the balance.

But not for the survivors of the 'Exeter Conspiracy'. Margaret, the Marquess of Exeter and Baron Montagu were held in the Tower at the king's pleasure. Their confinement was not severe. They enjoyed quarters befitting their rank and were attended by their servants, but they were totally dependent on Henry's changeable moods. Other relatives and friends of the condemned were rounded up and subjected to the closest scrutiny. No convincing evidence of a plot was forthcoming but that was of no consequence. As soon as the king was satisfied that no further purpose could be served by their continued detention he ordered the sentence against Exeter and Montagu to be carried out on 9 January 1539.

At some point the elderly countess was removed to a cell where she spent some time carving a verse on the wall:

For traitors on the block should die,
I am no traitor, no, not I!
My faithfulness stands fast and so
Towards the block I shall not go!
Nor make one step, as you shall see;
Christ in Thy Mercy, save Thou me!

Months passed. Henry made another marriage (arranged by Cromwell) with a German Protestant princess – and subsequently wriggled out of it. His next matrimonial adventure was with the teenage charmer, Catherine Howard. In the late spring of 1541, he set out on a long-promised tour of the

"HENRY WAS BESIDE HIMSELF WITH RAGE. NOTHING ANGERED HIM MORE THAN BETRAYAL AND HE WAS BENT ON REVENGE"

THE HAZARDS OF ROYAL BLOOD

Even Henry's closest friends were not above suspicion

The crisis of the English Reformation occurred against the background of the centralisation of political power. Since the Norman Conquest the answer to the question 'Who rules England?' had habitually been settled by negotiation. Kings needed the support of the powerful territorial magnates who kept the peace in the region where they held sway. In these localities people related to the great aristocratic families more than the king in distant London. But times were changing. By shows of military strength backed by an efficient bureaucracy, Henry VII had enhanced royal power in the more distant parts of the realm. Throughout much of the south-west the traditional local rulers had been the Courtenay Earls of Devon since the 14th century. When, in 1519, Henry Courtenay married a daughter of Edward IV he became closely related to Henry VII, who had also taken a Yorkist princess to wife. Courtenay became a close companion of Henry VIII, enjoyed the king's favour and was created Marquess of Exeter. He seems to have nursed no personal pretensions nor passionate disagreement with royal policy. He supported the king in his annulment proceedings against Catherine and, when the Pilgrimage of Grace broke out, Courtenay was one of the generals sent to suppress it. And yet something of the old desire to play a prominent role in the framing of policy lingered. Inevitably, the marquess clashed with Thomas Cromwell, who was determined to steer the king down the Reformation road. Personal animosity and the minister's tidy mind in regard to removing all opponents of his policy combined to create a suspicion of conspiracy where no conspiracy existed. Courtenay was branded a traitor by association and was executed in December 1538.

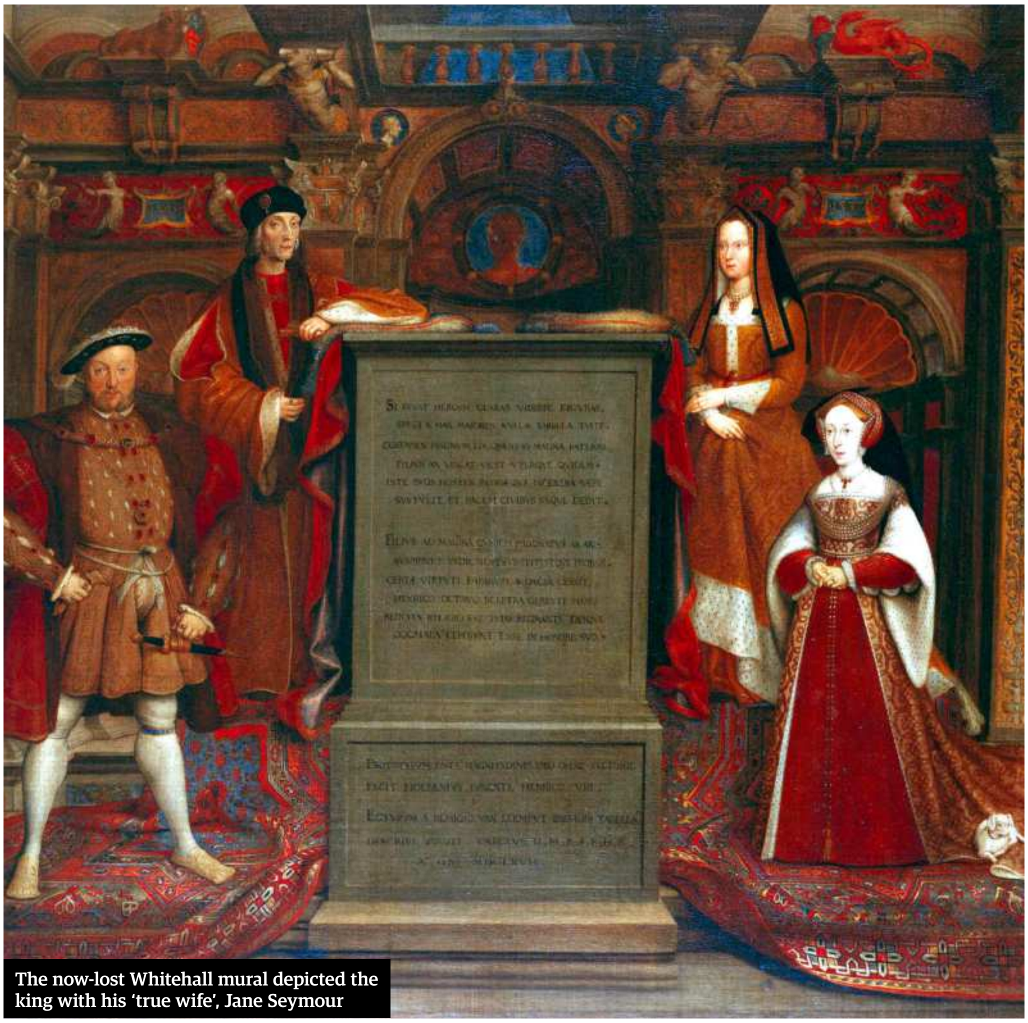
Powderham Castle near Exeter was – and remains – the seat of the Courtenays

lately disaffected northern shires. He thought it prudent first to clear the Tower of all traitors. Margaret Pole was one of those included in this tidying up operation. She went to the block on 27 May, protesting her innocence to the last.

The most prominent descendant of the royal house of York was Arthur Plantagenet. Henry treated his uncle kindly, installing him in his court in the early days of his reign. He was elevated to the peerage as Viscount Lisle in 1523 and was appointed to various minor government offices and sinecures. Ten years later he moved across the Channel to serve as Constable of Calais. He was not the most efficient of royal servants but he did serve the king to the best of his ability. In 1539 there were serious disturbances in this outpost of English rule. Fiery Protestant preaching was disturbing the peace and Catholic dissidents were looking to their French friends to halt the slide into deeper heresy. Back in London Lisle was coming under criticism for his failure to control the situation. In 1540 some of Lisle's servants were arrested, accused of seeking to betray the town to the French. Lisle was arrested on suspicion of treason. Locked in the Tower of London, where his Yorkist relatives were also held, Lisle was inevitably in great fear of sharing their fate. He was held until April 1542 but eventually Henry decided to release him. The news proved fatal. Months of anxiety followed by the euphoria of being restored to royal favour brought on a heart attack from which he died on 2 May.

Such personal adventures and misadventures of prominent people are fascinating and much loved by the writers and readers of popular history. They provide a corrective to any 'dry as dust' record of battles, treaties and Acts of parliament. But they must always be seen in the context of the great events that shape the fate of nations.

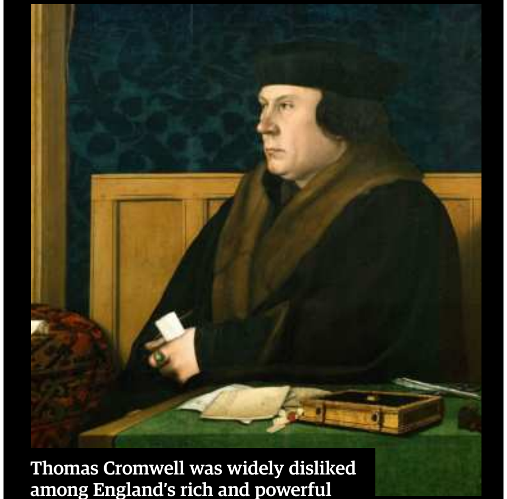
> "THE ELDERLY COUNTESS, MARGARET POLE, WENT TO THE BLOCK, PROTESTING HER INNOCENCE TO THE LAST"


The now-lost Whitehall mural depicted the king with his 'true wife', Jane Seymour

THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE

Thomas Cromwell made some powerful enemies

Something all the opponents of Henry's policy shared was their hatred of Thomas Cromwell. He was anathema to the aristocratic families because of his lowly origins. He was loathed by Catholics because of his religious revisionism. He was detested by the monks and their friends for his ruthless suppression of the monasteries. And he was resented by all those because of his influence with the king. This son of a Putney innkeeper spent his formative years in Renaissance Florence and learned much from the political rivalries of the Medicis and their enemies. Returning to England, around 1520, he entered Cardinal Wolsey's service as legal and business agent and came thus to the attention of Henry VIII. The decade 1530-40 may reasonably be called 'the age of Cromwell'. Established members of the aristocratic and ecclesiastical hierarchies looked on with bewilderment as Cromwell took control of religious policy, stripped the church of its assets and redistributed them to land-hungry magnates and re-aligned England with the Reformation progressives. Cardinal Pole reviled Cromwell in his book and accused the king of falling under the influence of a dangerous heretic. It is still difficult to come to an objective judgement about this brilliant workaholic. It was the combination of his clear-headed objectives and the king's ruthless implementation of them that changed the direction of English history.


Thomas Cromwell was widely disliked among England's rich and powerful

THE SIX WIVES

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Betrothed to his elder brother, Henry VIII's first wife proved more than just his queen when she led an army against the Scots

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Henry was a loyal, loving husband, but he was in need of a son and heir more

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Anne spent seven years in France, learning the tricks of the courtly trade. How would they influence her reception at the Tudor court?

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The controversial royal wedding that changed the course of England's future forever

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Having a Boleyn mistress and then a Boleyn queen at the centre of power brought advantages, but royal favour had a nasty habit of morphing into ostracism - or a good deal worse

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How Jane Seymour rose from humble origins to become Henry VIII's favourite wife

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She's been described as dim-witted, naive and promiscuous, but was Catherine Howard guilty of her crimes or a victim of a far darker one?

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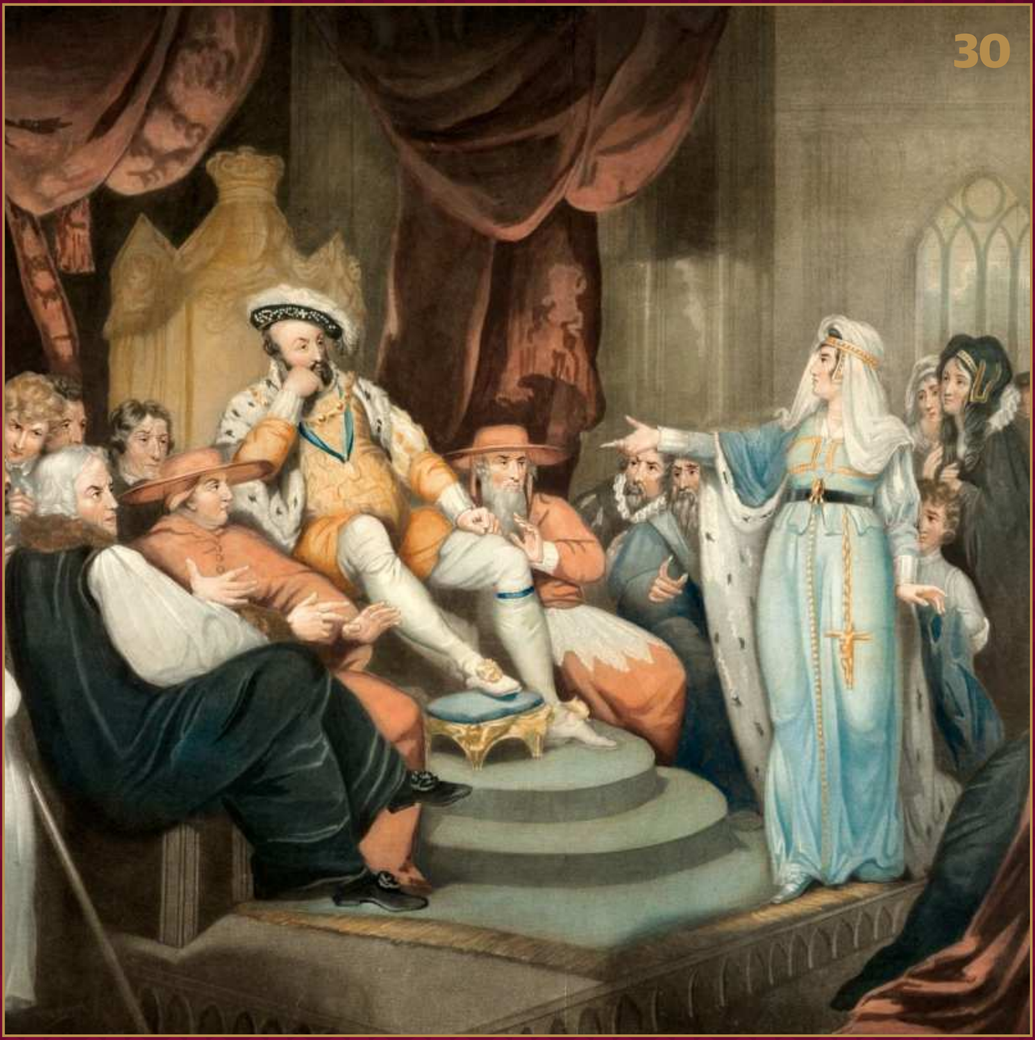
Catherine Parr wasn't just lucky to outlive Henry - she was a shrewd queen who knew how to keep her head

92 **The seventh bride**
Did Henry VIII really consider making the outspoken, opinionated Katherine Willoughby his seventh wife?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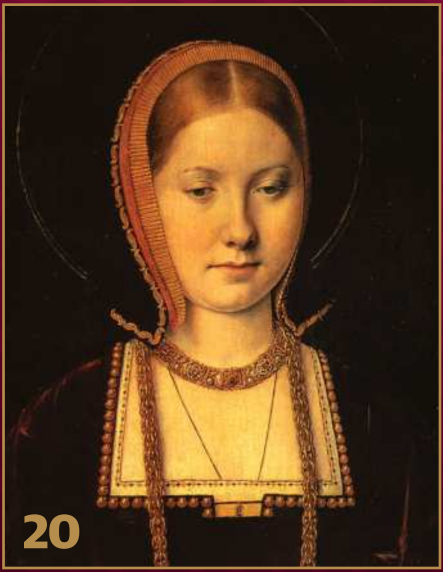
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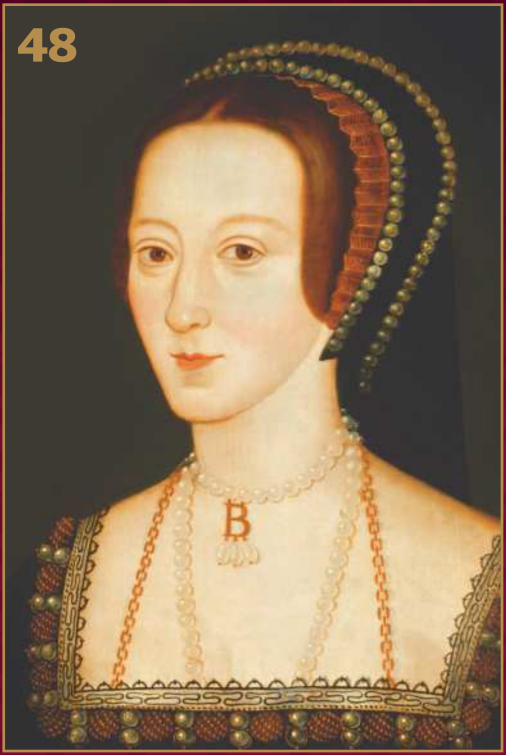
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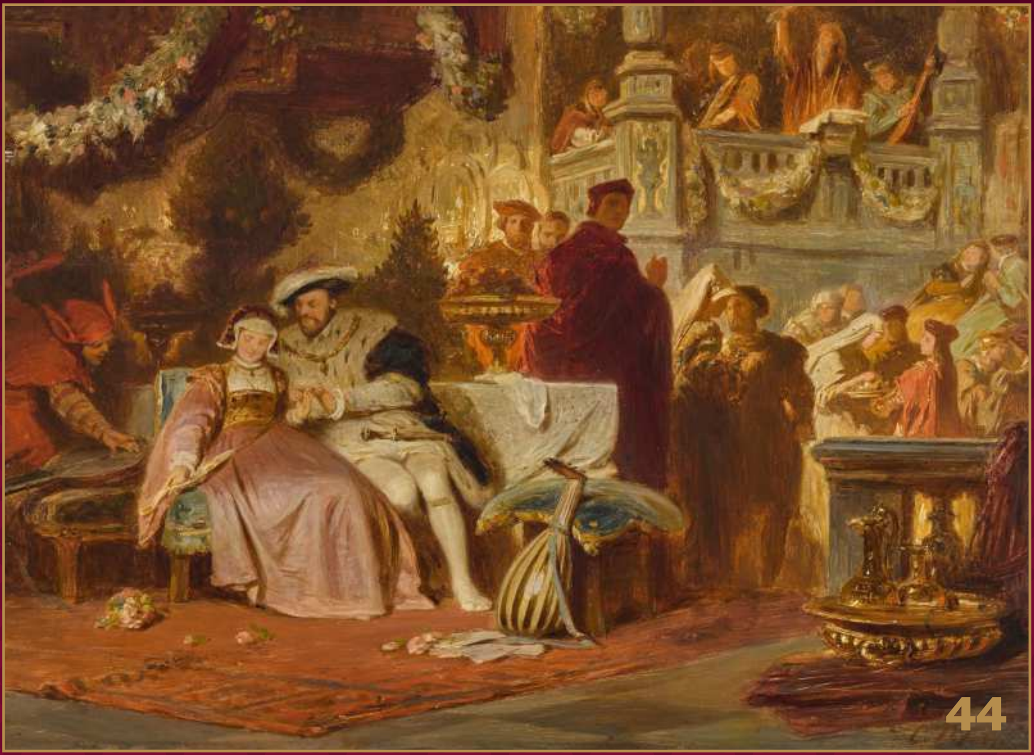
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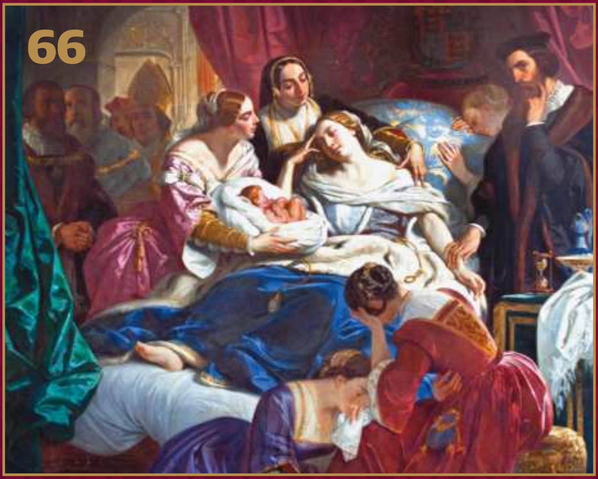
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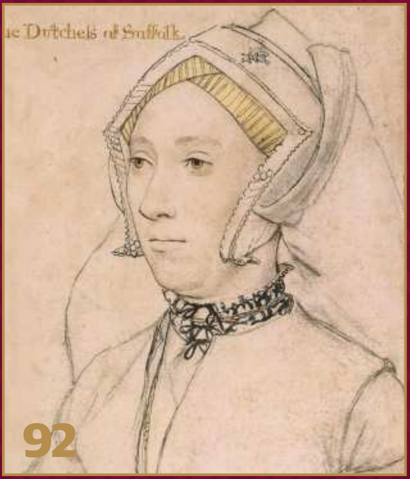
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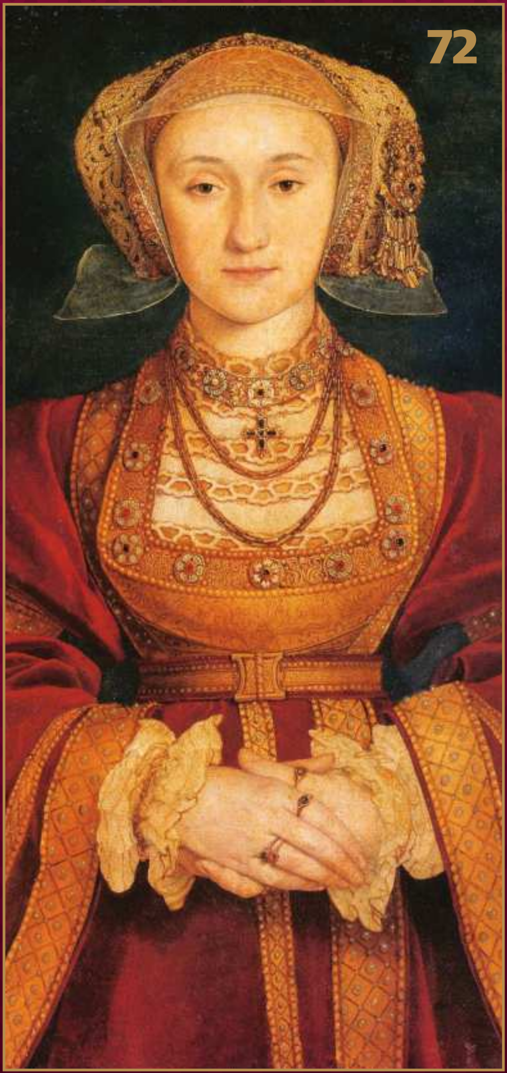
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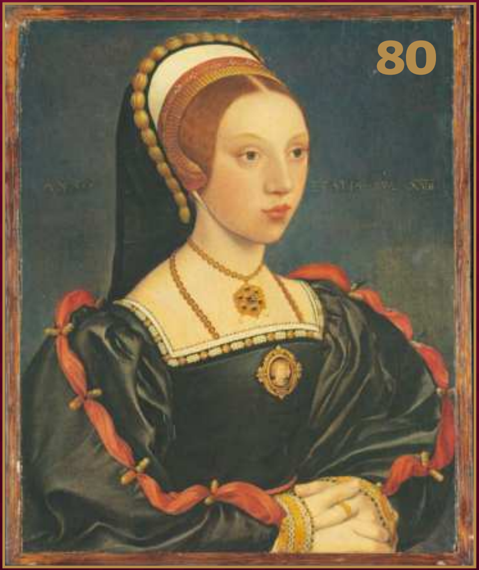
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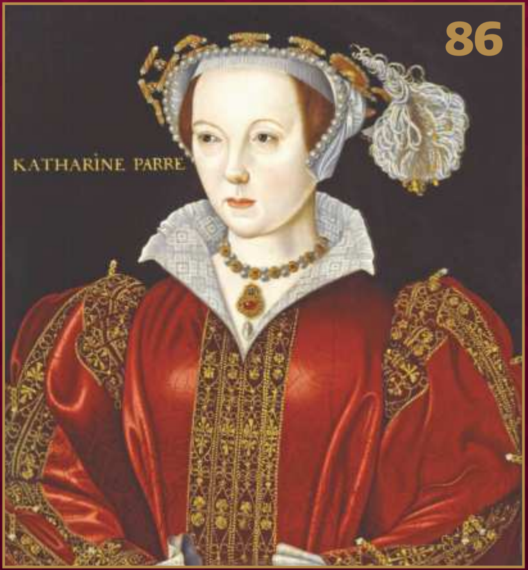
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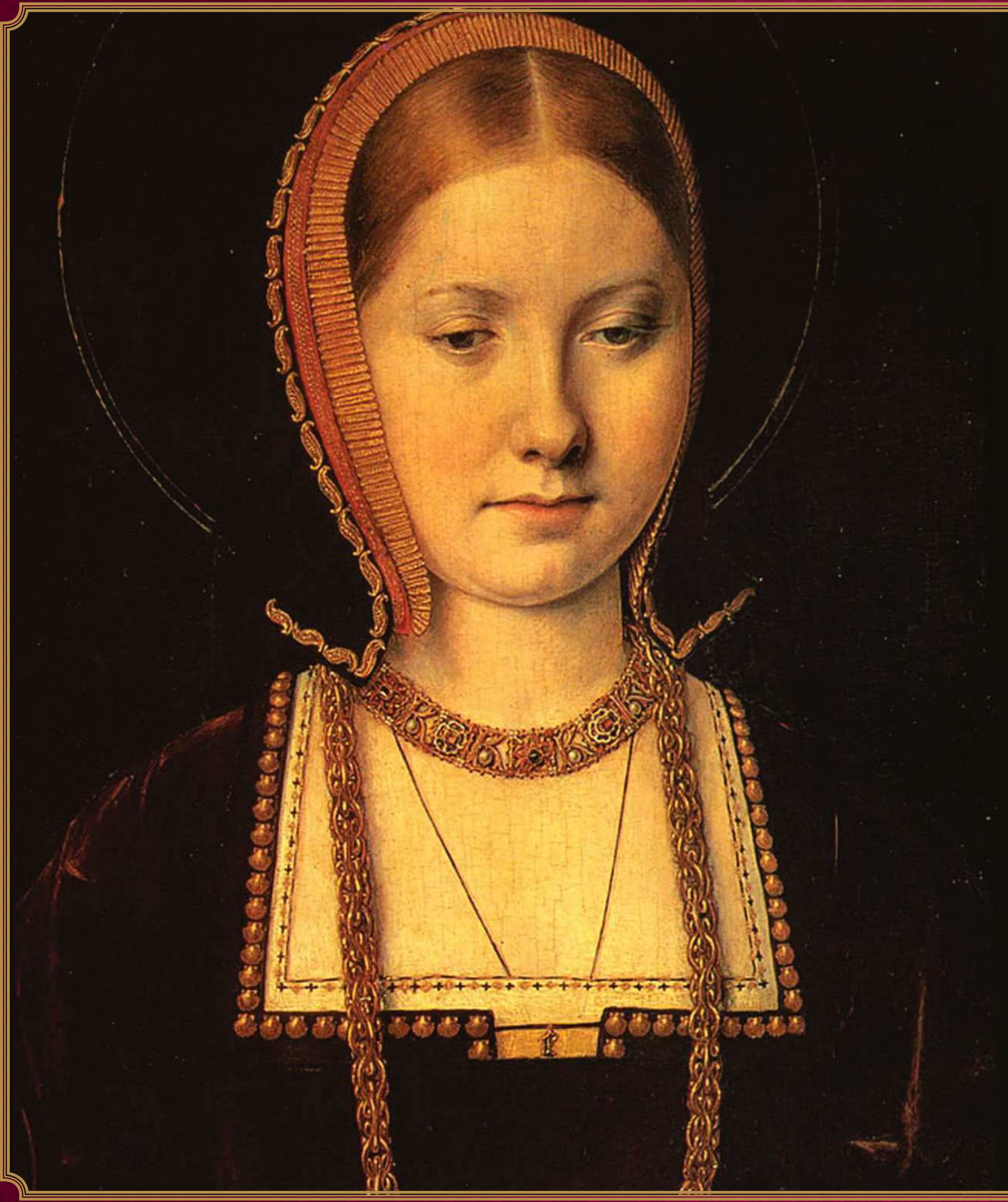
KATHARINE PARRE



DESTINED TO BE QUEEN

Betrothed to his elder brother, Henry's first wife proved to be more than just his queen when led an army against the Scots in his stead

Written by Derek Wilson

If we want to understand Catherine of Aragon, we must start by understanding her mother. The formidable Isabella of Castile, who combined a fiery national pride, an iron will and an unwavering dedication to the teaching of the Catholic Church. Isabella had to fight for the throne of Castile and, after her marriage to Ferdinand II of Aragon in 1469, she retained the exclusive right to reign in her own territory.

The union of the two crowns was the basis of Spain's emergence as a major power in Europe, with access to the political and mercantile life of the Mediterranean world and the thriving economies of the Netherlands, England and the Baltic. More than that, thanks to Isabella's patronage of Christopher Columbus, Spain played a pioneering role in the establishment of European global empires. But the sovereigns' gaze was not only turned outwards; Ferdinand and Isabella were determined that their territory should be entirely Catholic. They brought to a conclusion the long Reconquista, the driving of the Moors from Spain. Granada was an Islamic kingdom in the south of Iberia and it had contracted over 500 years due to intermittent pressure from the Christian north. Ferdinand and Isabella completed the conquest in 1492.

> "SPAIN PLAYED A PIONEERING ROLE IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EUROPEAN GLOBAL EMPIRES"

Although unable to go into battle herself, Isabella often appeared before her troops in part-armour to encourage and inspire them. She was closely involved in aspects of military life, such as organising field hospitals. Not content with this victory, the joint rulers were intent on a religious purge of their territory. They expelled all Muslims and Jews who would not convert and those who did convert were subjected to rigid interrogation to ensure that their change of allegiance was genuine. This called for a special religious judicial system with extensive powers.

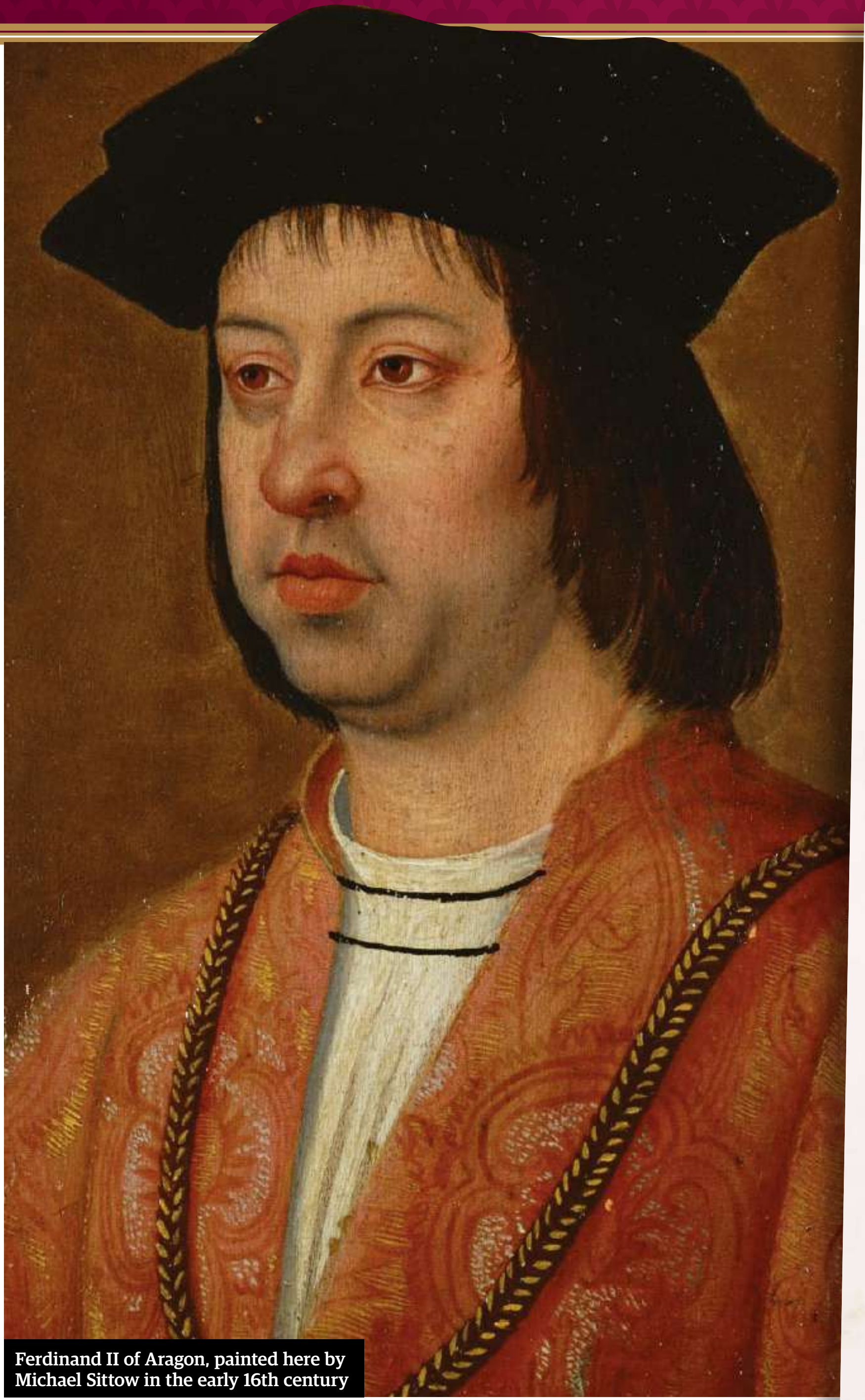
With that, the Spanish Inquisition was born, a frightening fusion of church and state authority that was responsible for the imprisonment and death of thousands of victims before its abolition in the 19th century. Isabella was aware of the power of her religious programme, and she used the imperative of holy war and her role as the agent of God to solidify the support she needed. She created a messianic image of herself that promised to undo the ills of the past and lead Spain on its true, Christian, course.

Catherine was her mother's daughter – intensely loyal to her dynasty and her church. As the younger female child of the rulers of a powerful new nation, she was an important pawn in international diplomacy, but she had also been brought up to see herself as having a mission to support the Catholic crusade led by Spain. Her marriage to the heir to the English throne was eagerly sought by both Ferdinand and Henry VII.

Henry, whose claim to rule rested only on conquest and who was plagued by Yorkist plots, coveted the cachet given to his dynasty by this impressive union. Ferdinand valued English support against France, which stood in the way of Spain's further expansion. In the autumn of 1501, Catherine arrived in England and was married to Arthur, Prince of Wales. The groom had just passed his 15th birthday. Catherine was nine months older. Just over four months later, she was a widow after Arthur died at Ludlow where he was performing his princely duties.

Catherine spent the next seven years in limbo. Ferdinand and Henry were reluctant to break off the alliance and it was arranged that Catherine should marry the English King's second son, Henry, Duke of York – when he was old enough (he was only nine at the time of his brother's death). It was a wretched time for the lonely girl in a foreign land and her grief was made worse when, at the end of 1504, news arrived that her beloved mother had died. The two kings haggled and argued over her fate. The marriage was on and then off. Impotent and frustrated, Catherine was not content to be sidelined. Convention demanded that she should wait patiently upon the decisions of her father and potential father-in-law. That was not Catherine's style.

> “Henry was determined to be a ruler in the romantic mould of King Arthur”



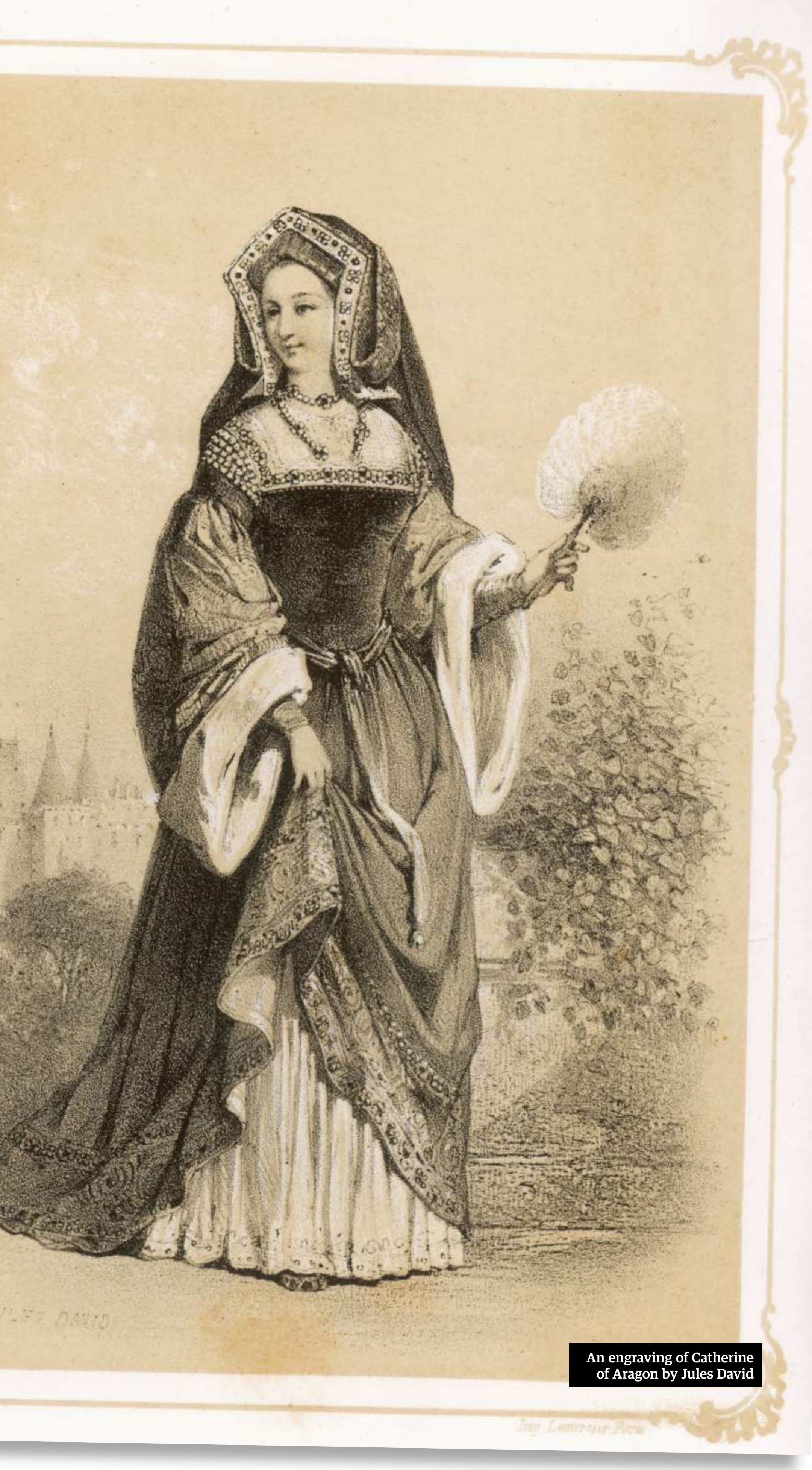
Ferdinand II of Aragon, painted here by Michael Sittow in the early 16th century

She intervened in diplomacy, going so far as to demand that Ferdinand sack his ambassador, as he counselled abandoning the marriage treaty. Catherine's fate was still undecided when Henry VII died in April 1509. One of the new King's first decisions was to marry his widowed sister-in-law. It was important to those closest that the marriage should be a success. For Henry, 'success' meant securing the Tudor dynasty and strengthening Anglo-Spanish ties. He was set on regaining England's role as a lead player in European affairs that had been lost during the Wars of the Roses. He shared Ferdinand's understanding of France as his main obstacle.

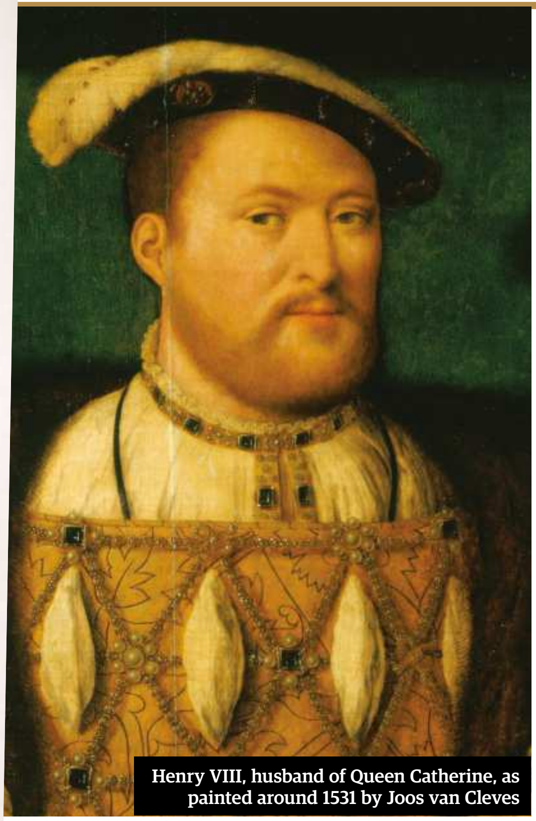
All began well. The lusty, vigorous, athletic, teenage king brushed away the cobwebs of his father's cautious, frugal, pragmatic, financially oppressive policy and was determined to be a ruler in the adventurous, romantic mould of King Arthur and Henry V. From his earliest years, Henry was brought up on those heroic legends.

Catherine's position could not have changed more dramatically. She reported to her father that life had become one long holiday, a time of banquets, dances, tourneys and hunting. Thomas More, in a flattering eulogy, set the regime change in wider perspective:

> *The nobility, long since at the mercy of the dregs of the population... whose title has too long been without meaning, now lifts is head, now rejoices in such a King, and has proper reason for rejoicing. The merchant, heretofore deterred by numerous taxes, now once again ploughs seas grown unfamiliar. Laws, heretofore powerless –*



An engraving of Catherine of Aragon by Jules David

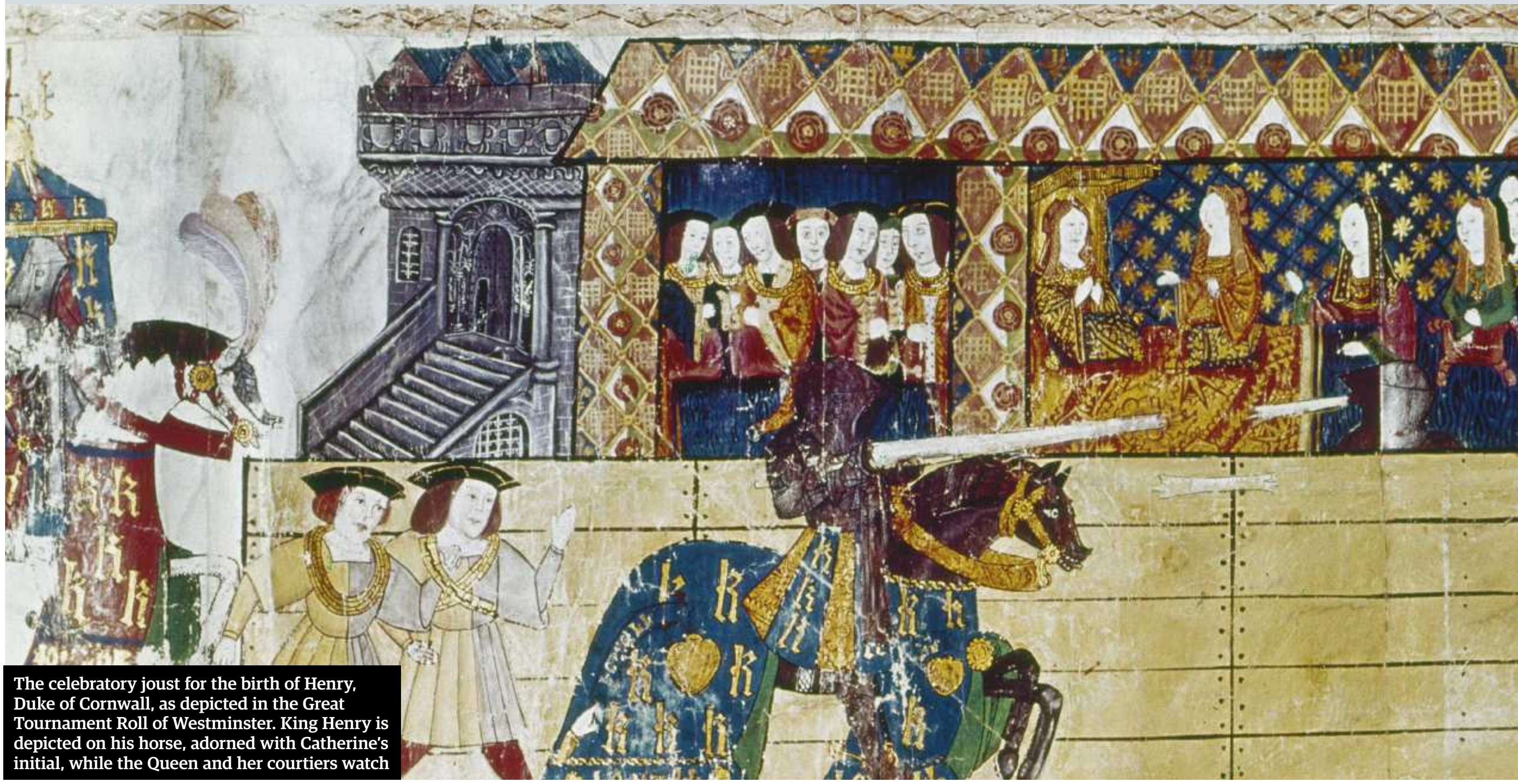


Henry VIII, husband of Queen Catherine, as painted around 1531 by Joos van Cleves

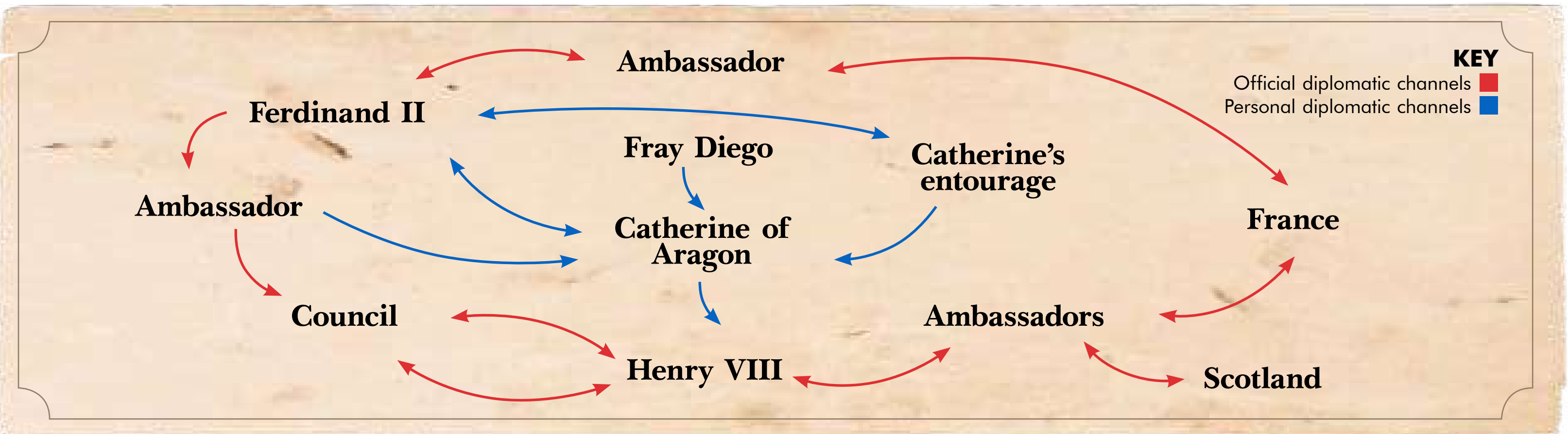
even laws put to unjust ends – now happily have regained their proper authority. All are equally happy. All weigh their earlier losses against the advantages to come.

It took only a few months for sad reality to set in. Catherine was delirious to discover herself pregnant in August 1509 but five months later, she miscarried a daughter. She was overwhelmed with a sense of failure, so much so that she concealed the news from her father for as long as possible. Fortunately, a second child was, by then, on the way. On 1 January 1511, she gave birth to a boy. A delirious Henry really pushed the boat out in celebration. A magnificent international tournament was held at Westminster and the king made a pilgrimage to the shrine at Walsingham. Ten days later the infant was dead. Failure again – and this time more humiliating. It has often been thought that Henry began to question the validity of his marriage in the 1520s but doubts began to creep in much earlier. In taking Catherine as his wife, Henry had flouted his father's dying wishes, the advice of his council and the rules of holy church. Could it be that the loss of his children signified divine displeasure? For the time being, the king stifled any such misgivings.

Catherine encouraged him to do so and threw her weight behind diplomatic manoeuvres directed towards Anglo-Spanish war with France. She was more eager than ever to justify her raison d'etre as a political link between Spain and England and worked behind the scenes to disarm the peace party on the council. She was a willing pawn in the game of military diplomacy that was now played out. But it was



The celebratory joust for the birth of Henry, Duke of Cornwall, as depicted in the Great Tournament Roll of Westminster. King Henry is depicted on his horse, adorned with Catherine's initial, while the Queen and her courtiers watch



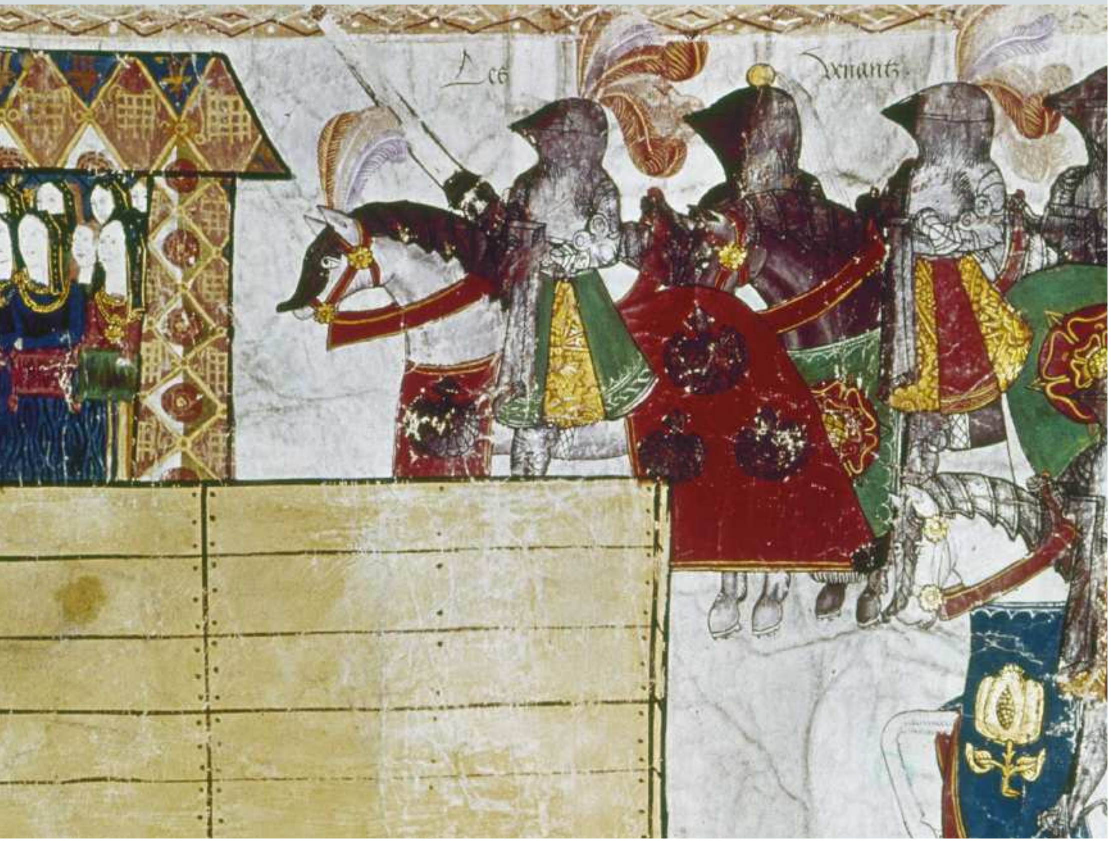
FAMILY DIPLOMACY

When Catherine married Henry VIII she found herself at the centre of a complex diplomatic web. There were the official channels by which monarchs maintained contact through their ambassadors but there was also an inner ring of personal relationships. Catherine, naturally, maintained a correspondence with her father.

Ferdinand's main objective was to manipulate Henry in the interests of Spain's foreign policy and he did not hesitate to bring pressure to bear on his daughter to this end. He worked through his ambassador who, in 1509, was Don Gutur Gomez de Fuensalida, and also through his informants in Catherine's entourage. Members of this latter group used their family connections at the court in Aragon to further their own interests and were in a position to influence the queen on a daily basis. But the man who had most power over Catherine was her confessor, a Dominican friar called Fray Diego Fernandez. Fuensalida hated him – he was a forceful, charismatic man who was a particular hit with the ladies. As Catherine's closest confidant, he came to hold real power over her. On one occasion, Henry VII sent instructions that she was to come to Richmond Palace, Fray Diego forbade her to go. When she demurred, he demanded, "upon pain of mortal sin you shall not go today." Fuensalida demanded the friar's recall. But it was he who left England in disgrace, thanks to Catherine's advocacy.

In 1509, existing peace treaties with France and Scotland were confirmed on the authority of the council and, much to the annoyance of the new king, Ferdinand's main objective was to undermine England's relationship with France. He pressured Catherine and urged his new ambassador, Luis Caroz, to exert all possible influence to the same end. In fact, Henry needed no arm-twisting, since he was resolved on a 'glorious' war with France.

As long as Henry believed that he and Ferdinand were bent on the same objectives, Catherine's position was not too difficult but her father's devious dealing made holes in the alliance that she was at pains to patch up. When the 1512 campaign ended in fiasco, Ferdinand placed the blame on the 'cowardly' English commanders and demanded that Henry punish them. Catherine negotiated this difficulty by her own style of duplicity. She openly agreed with her father and the captains were put on trial. But it was all a farce. None of the 'offenders' suffered seriously. The alliance was saved.



not a game between equals. Ferdinand, a master of duplicity, had waited long to draw England into his ambitious schemes. Through Catherine, he encouraged Henry's bellicose dreams of regaining land in Aquitaine that had once been annexed to the English crown, while his real intention was to use the English invasion as a diversion to cover his own assault on the Pyrenean kingdom of Navarre.

The campaigning of 1512 was remarkable for extravagant bravura and humiliating disaster. Henry doubled the size of his navy. When he heard that James IV of Scotland had ordered the building of the Michael in France, the biggest warship afloat, he commissioned the Henry Grace à Dieu to outclass it. The glorious game of war was celebrated in jousts and court festivities and when the army embarked at Southampton, he went into raptures over the scene:

> *To see the lords and gentlemen so well armed and so richly apparelled in cloths of gold and silver and velvets of sundry colours, pounced and embroidered, and all petty captains in satin and damask of white and green and yeoman in cloth of the same colour, the banners, pennons, standards... fresh and newly painted with sundry beasts and devices, it was a pleasure to behold.*

But the troops sent to south-west France were deserted by their Spanish allies and returned with their tails between their legs while naval engagements in the Channel cost many lives and achieved nothing. Inevitably, relations between the allies were strained but Henry was set on his heroic adventure and Catherine played her discreet part in oiling the wheels of the war machine. She was particularly attached to the navy and, as her mother had emboldened her soldiers and personally involved herself in administrative detail, so Catherine maintained contact with naval captains. At one point she negotiated with Venice to hire galleys. Ultimately nothing came of this, but her back-stairs diplomacy in Rome bore more important fruit. Through Cardinal Bainbridge, Archbishop of York, she brought pressure to bear on Pope Julius II to threaten James IV with excommunication if he intervened in England to help the French. The resulting Anglo-Scottish conflict was a by-product of the convoluted state of European politics.

“HENRY WAS SET ON HIS HEROIC ADVENTURE AND CATHERINE PLAYED HER DISCREET PART IN OILING THE WHEELS OF THE WAR MACHINE”

In response to France overrunning part of north Italy, Julius had formed the Holy League embracing Spain, the Holy Roman Empire and England ostensibly in defence of the Church (though each participant had his own objectives). James IV was torn between his obligation as a Catholic monarch, his alliance with England (he was married to Henry's sister, Margaret) and his commitment to the traditional Auld Alliance with France. Eventually, it was the latter – plus some pretty inflammatory correspondence with Henry – that made the decision for him.

The main invasion of France was led by Henry in person and was planned for the summer of 1513. On 15 June, the king and queen set out from Greenwich on their way to Dover, where Henry was to embark with his grand army. Their first halt was at Canterbury where they prayed at the shrine of St Thomas à Becket (which would be demolished by Henry VIII 25 years later). While the King crossed the Channel, he deputed Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey, to deal with the Scottish threat and he left Catherine in overall command in England as Regent and Governor.

At last, Isabella's daughter was in her element. Nature may have deprived her of her role as a royal mother but she would now show that she was a military champion, inspiring her troops, planning the overall campaign against the Scots and attending to the necessary logistics. She oversaw the despatch of Surry and his army by land and a supporting seaborne force with reinforcements and heavy artillery. The total English contingent numbered around 20,000.

Catherine also presided over the council, still not united in enthusiasm for the venture, and sent regular reports to her husband. But that was not all. Careful contingency plans were set in motion in case the Scottish advance was not effectively halted by Howard. A secondary army was raised in the Midlands and a third, under Catherine's personal command, formed a line of defence in the home counties. When her force was mustered, the queen rode out to deliver a rousing speech, “in imitation of her mother” as one observer reported. Did she, we may wonder, deck herself in part armour like the redoubtable Isabella? In the event, elaborate defensive measures proved unnecessary. On 9 September, Surrey's men won an overwhelming victory in the largest ever Anglo-Scottish confrontation at a place called Flodden Field or Branxton Moor.

This encounter has been referred to as the last Medieval battle fought on British soil because of the weaponry used and the rules of chivalry which, in some measure, governed it. The Scots had crossed the border and enjoyed considerable success in early actions. After some unaccountable delay, they had taken up an excellent defensive position on Flodden Hill, some 2,000 metres to the south of the Northumberland village of Branxton, lying four kilometres south east of

Coldstream. The terrain was hilly, with high ground and steep-sided valleys running roughly east to west.

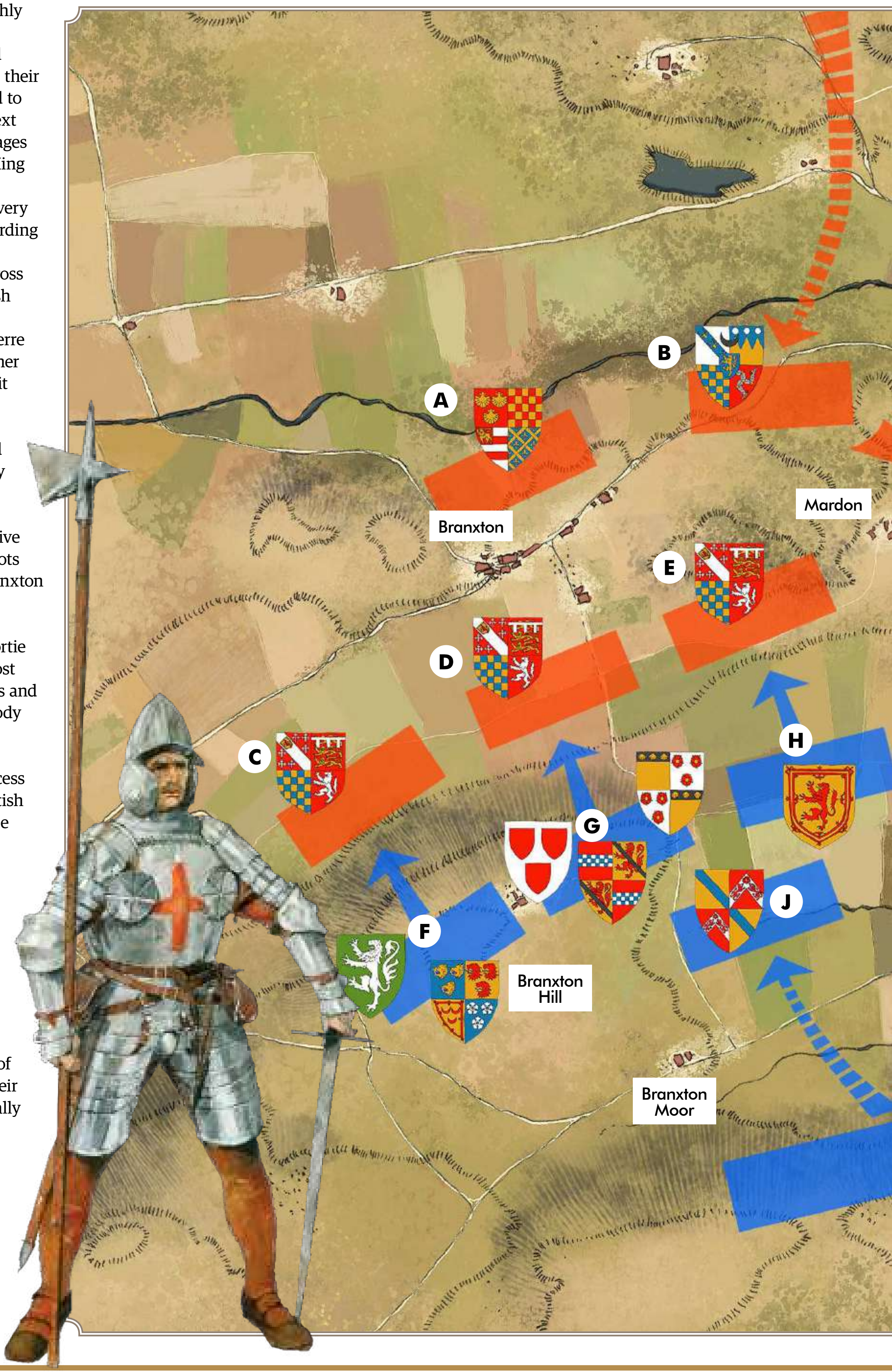
In an effort to dislodge the enemy, Howard turned away northwards. The Scots did leave their vantage point but, though the English turned to face them, they succeeded in reaching the next ridge, Branxton Hill. In an exchange of messages via heralds, Suffolk challenged the Scottish King to meet him on level ground and a time and place was appointed for the battle. It was all very honourably arranged. More surprisingly, according to the Scottish chronicler, Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie, as Howard brought his artillery across the River Till, he came in range of the Scottish cannon but James refused to take advantage and ordered his weapons to stay silent. As Pierre Bosquet remarked centuries later about another brave but misguided military decision, "C'était magnifique mais ce n'était pas la guerre" - it was magnificent, but it wasn't war. It may be that James felt he could be generous. He held the initiative and outnumbered the enemy by some 10,000 men.

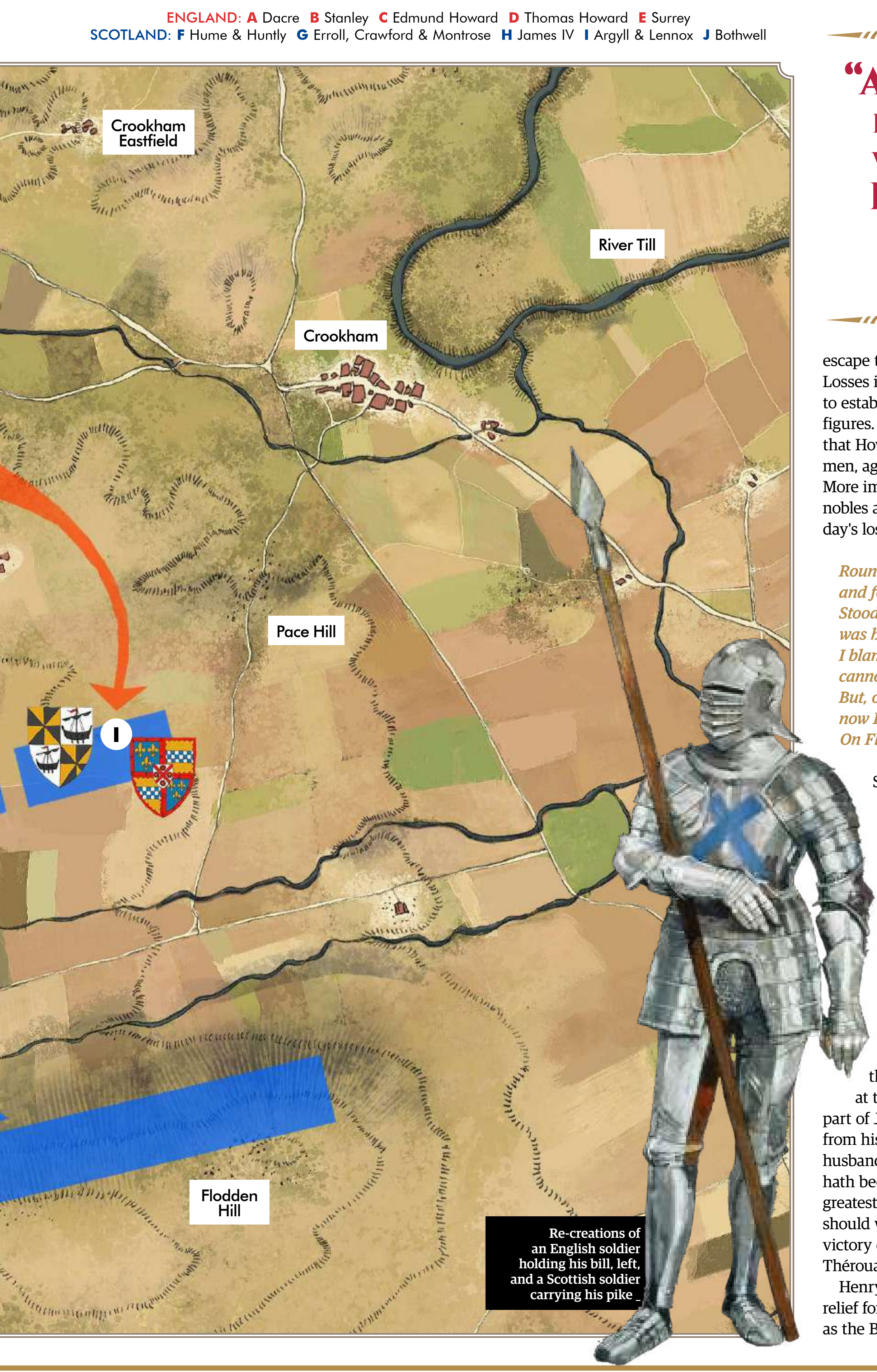
On 9 September, after an ineffective exchange of cannon fire, the Scots descended the north side of Branxton Hill to meet their adversaries in hand-to-hand battle as the commanders had agreed. At about 4pm, James began with a sortie against the right of the English line and almost broke it, but Howard sent in his reserve forces and the flank held. Along the rest of the line, bloody battle ensued in soggy ground that severely hampered mobility.

Military historians ascribe the English success to the superiority of their weapons. The Scottish infantry relied on the pike, a spear some three or four metres in length. It was a thrusting tool designed for use against both foot and mounted troops and worked best when the enemy could be prevented getting too close. The English employed the bill, developed from an agricultural implement. It was shorter than the pike and had an axe blade as well as a spearhead. As a cut-and-thrust weapon, it was of more use in the sort of close-contact fighting forced on the combatants by sticky ground conditions of Branxton Moor. The Scots had to abandon their pikes and draw their swords. They were literally scythed down in great numbers. The English right and left wings both pressed home their advantage, almost surrounding the enemy.

Even so, the day was far from won. King James led a furious charge against the standard borne before the Earl of Surrey. Had he reached the English commander, the day would have been his. In fact, he was cut down only a few metres from his quarry. At that, the Scots struggled to

Battle of Flodden 9 September 1513




ENGLAND: A Dacre B Stanley C Edmund Howard D Thomas Howard E Surrey
SCOTLAND: F Hume & Huntly G Erroll, Crawford & Montrose H James IV I Argyll & Lennox J Bothwell
Crookham Eastfield
River Till
Crookham
Pace Hill
I
Flodden Hill

Re-creations of an English soldier holding his bill, left, and a Scottish soldier carrying his pike

“A TIME AND PLACE FOR THE BATTLE WAS APPOINTED. IT WAS ALL VERY HONOURABLY ARRANGED”

escape the field pursued by the baying victors. Losses in Medieval battles are notoriously difficult to establish, since different records quote different figures. At a conservative estimate, we may say that Howard's army was depleted by some 1,500 men, against Scottish losses of around 10,000. More important politically was the number of nobles and major landowners who perished. The day's losses were long remembered in folklore:

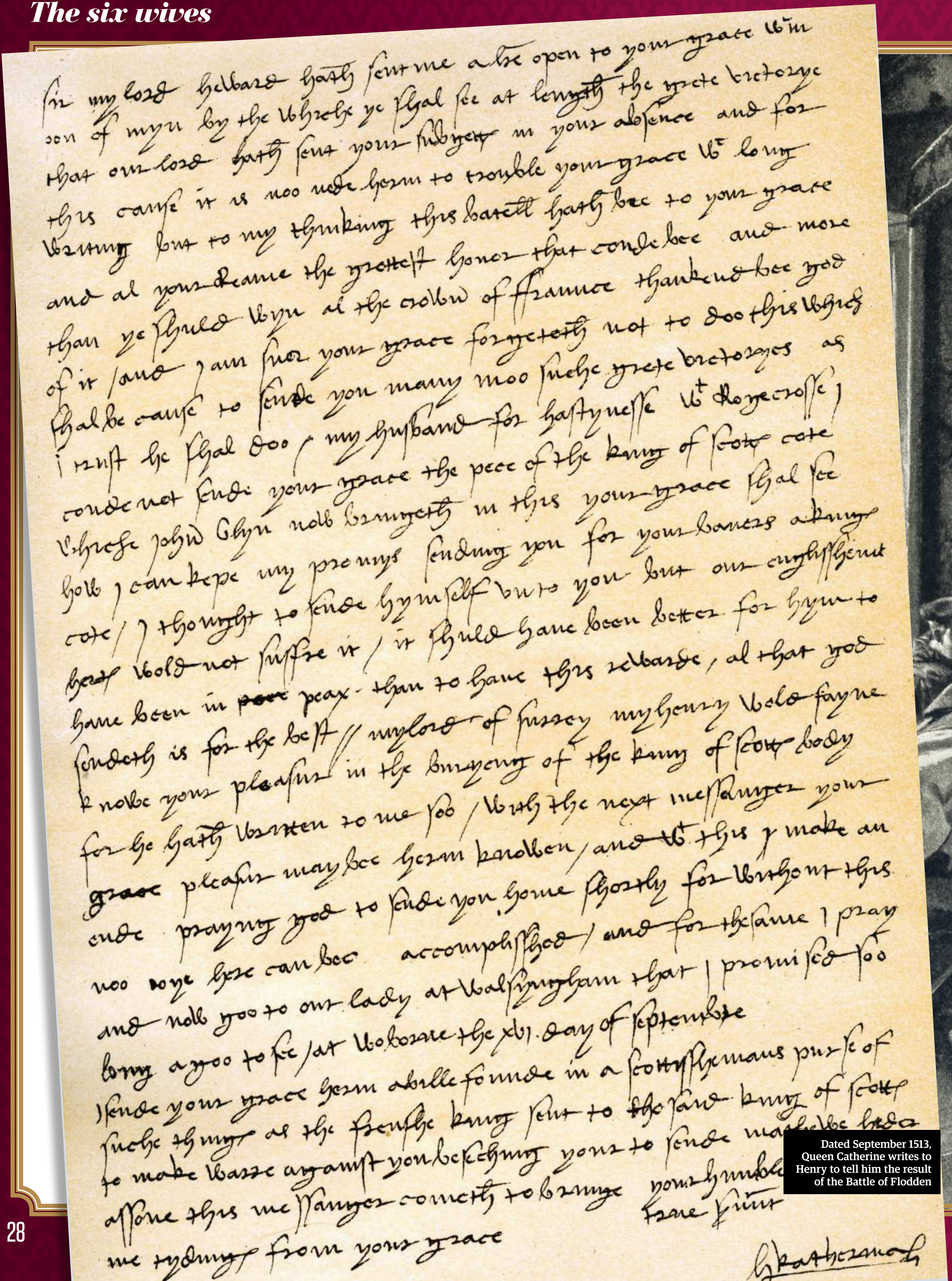
Round about their gallant king, for country and for crown,
Stood the dauntless Border ring, till the last was hacked down.
I blame not what has been. They must fall that cannot flee.
But, oh! To see what I have seen, to see what now I see,
On Flodden Field.

So wrote one 19th-century poet. An earlier lament (still played today) is the *Flowers Of The Forest*:

Mourn for the order sent our lads to the Border.
The English, for once, by guile won the day.
The flowers of the Forest that fought aye the foremost,
The prime of our land, lie cold in the clay.

About 300 miles away, en route for the north, Queen Catherine was jubilant at the news. Howard sent her a trophy, part of James's bloodstained surcoat, retrieved from his dead body, and she forwarded it to her husband. “To my thinking,” she wrote, “this battle hath been to your Grace and all your realm the greatest honour that could be, and more than ye should win all the crown of France.” The Scottish victory came soon after a successful skirmish at Thérouanne on 16 August.

Henry's army besieging the town saw off a relief force. The event was mockingly referred to as the Battle of the Spurs because of the speed

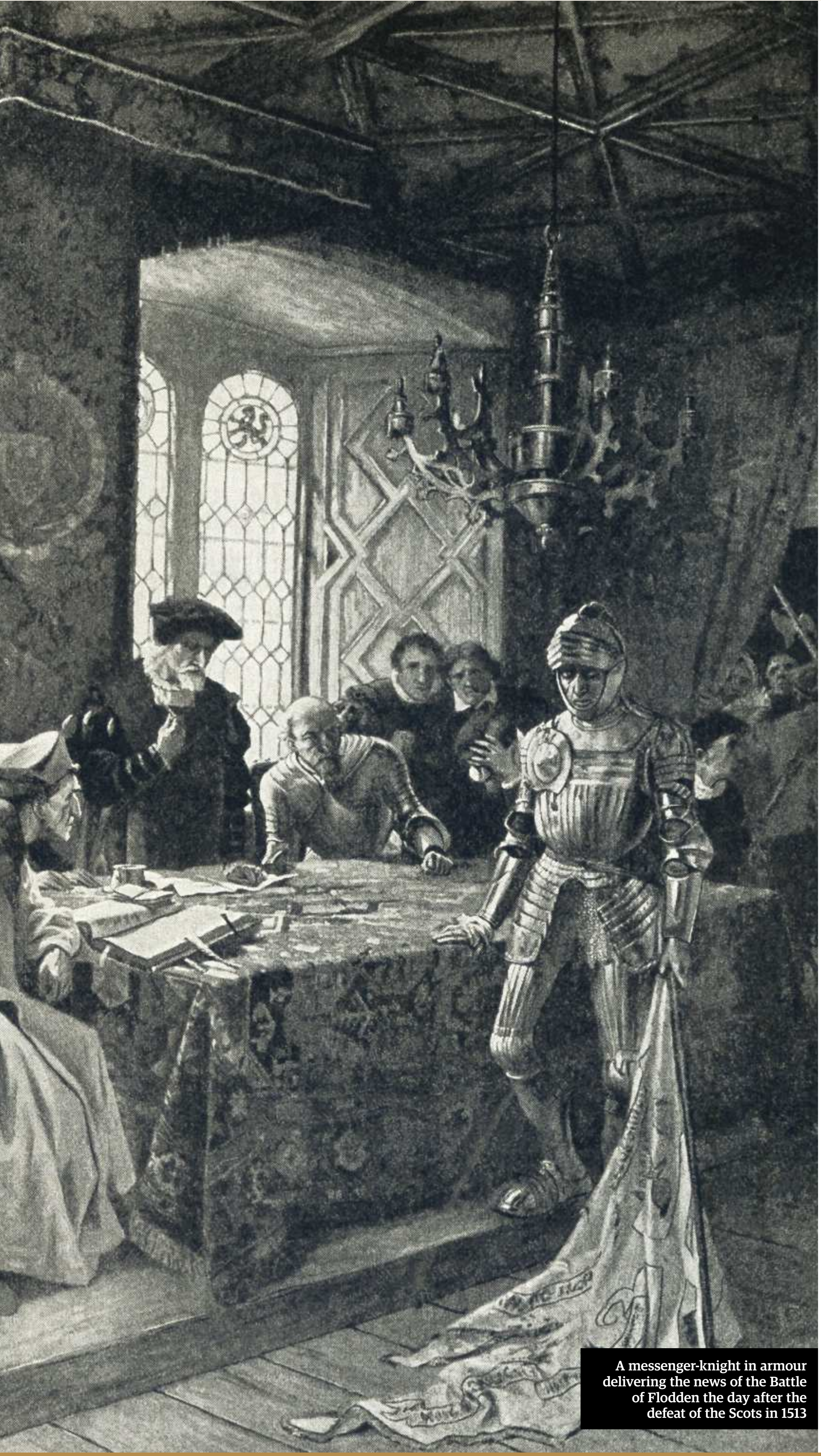


ſir my lord howarde hath ſent me a lre open to your grace wtin
oon of myn by the whiche ye ſhal ſee at length the grete victorye
that our lord hath ſent your ſubjectes in your abſence and for
this cauſe it is noo nede herin to trouble your grace wt long
writing but to my thinking this batell hath bee to your grace
and al your reame the grettest honor that coulde bee and more
than ye ſhulde wyn al the crown of ffraunce thankid bee god
of it /and I am ſuer your grace forgeteth not to doo this which
ſhalbe cauſe to ſende you many moo ſuche grete victoryes as
I truſt he ſhal doo / my huſband for haſtyneſſe wt Rogecroſſe I
coulde not ſende your grace the pece of the king of ſcottes cote
whiche John Glyn now bringeth in this your grace ſhal ſee
how I can kepe my promys ſending you for your baners a kinges
cote / I thought to ſende hymſelf unto you but our engliſſhemens
herts wold not ſuffre it / it ſhulde have been better for hym to
have been in ~~pece~~ peax than to have this rewarde, al that god
ſendeth is for the beſt // my lord of ſurrey my henry wolde fayne
knowe your pleaſur in the buryeng of the king of ſcottes body
for he hath written to me ſoo / with the next meſſanger your
grace pleaſur may bee herin knowen / and wt this I make an
ende praying god to ſende you home ſhortly for without this
noo joye here can bee accompliſſhed / and for the ſame I pray
and now goo to our lady at Walſyngham that I promiſed ſoo
long agoo to ſee / at Woborne the xvj day of ſeptembre
I ſende your grace herin a bille founde in a ſcottiſſhemans purſe of
ſuche thinges as the frenſhe king ſent to ~~the~~ ſaid king of ſcottes
to make warre agaynſt you beſeching you to ſende mathewe hider
aſſone this meſſanger cometh to bringe me tydinges from your grace

your humble
true ſervant

Katherine

Dated September 1513, Queen Catherine writes to Henry to tell him the result of the Battle of Flodden



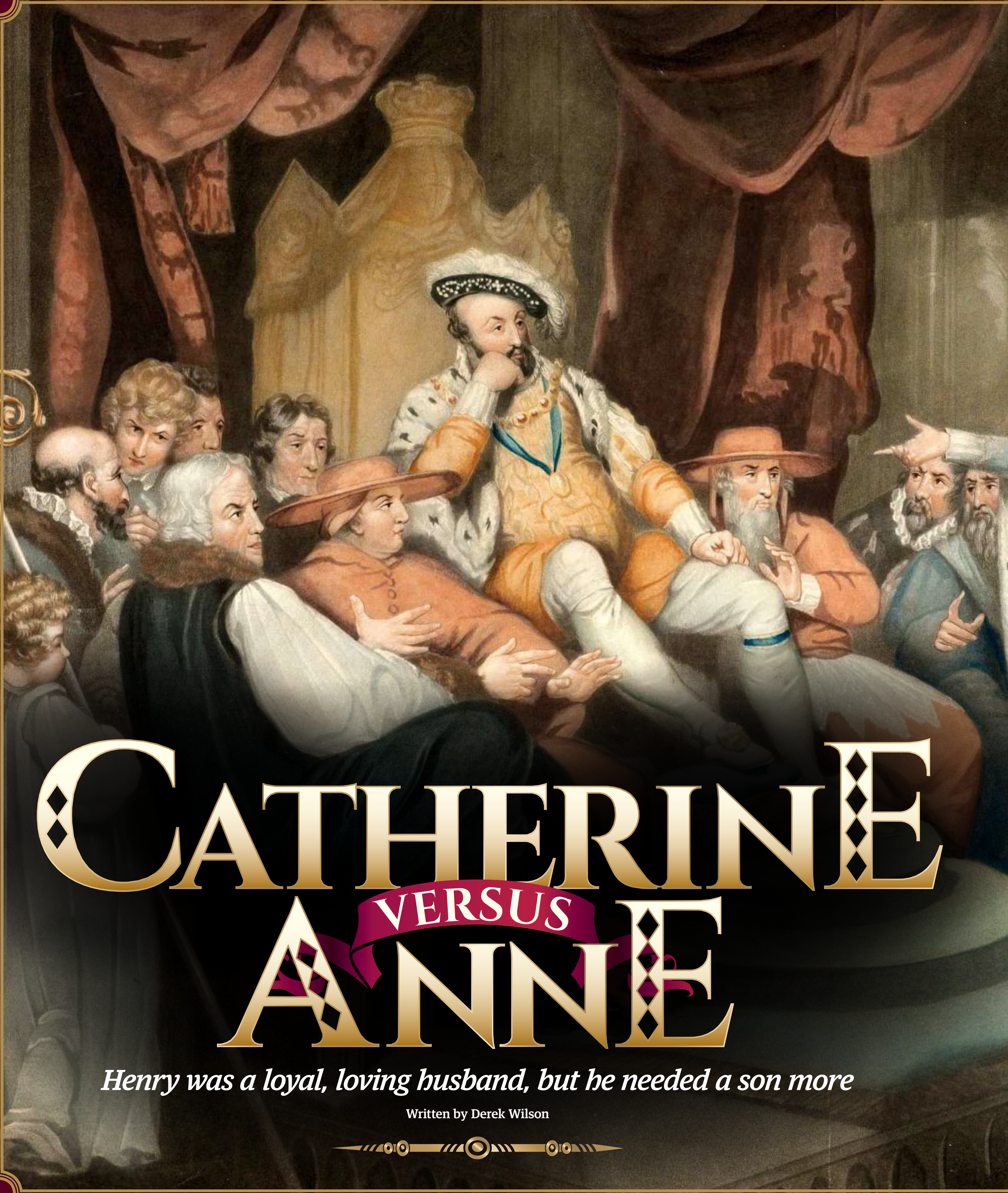
A messenger-knight in armour delivering the news of the Battle of Flodden the day after the defeat of the Scots in 1513

of the French retreat. Henry, too, sent a trophy across the Channel – the Duc de Longueville was an important captive and Catherine arranged honourable quarters for him in the Tower of London. Now she disbanded her troops and set off for Walsingham to give thanks, not only for victory, but also for the fact that she was again pregnant. But the sunlit sky was soon clouded over again. Catherine's pregnancy was either a misdiagnosis or ended in a miscarriage.

Then, in the spring of 1514, Henry's allies deserted him. Ferdinand and Emperor Maximilian signed a truce with France. Moreover, a proposed marriage between Princess Mary (the king's sister) and Ferdinand's nephew, Prince Charles, was put on hold. Henry seems, at last, to have grasped what diplomacy was all about. It had little or nothing to do with chivalry, loyalty and brotherhood-in-arms and everything to do with self-interest. He, too, sought to salvage what he could from the recent war. A peace treaty was signed with France that involved a substantial cash payment and the marriage of Mary, not to Charles, but to Louis XII. But, yet again, the diplomatic seesaw elevated Anglo-Spanish relations. The aged Louis died within weeks of his marriage. His place was taken by the young and energetic Francis I, who eagerly resumed hostilities in Italy. Events forced Henry and Ferdinand to renew their alliance and once again, Catherine conceived. But in the early days of 1516, her father died and shortly afterwards she was safely delivered of a child – a girl.

> “THE TUDOR DYNASTIC TRAIN HAD RUN INTO THE BUFFERS – OR WAS IT JUST A MATRIMONIAL SIDING?”

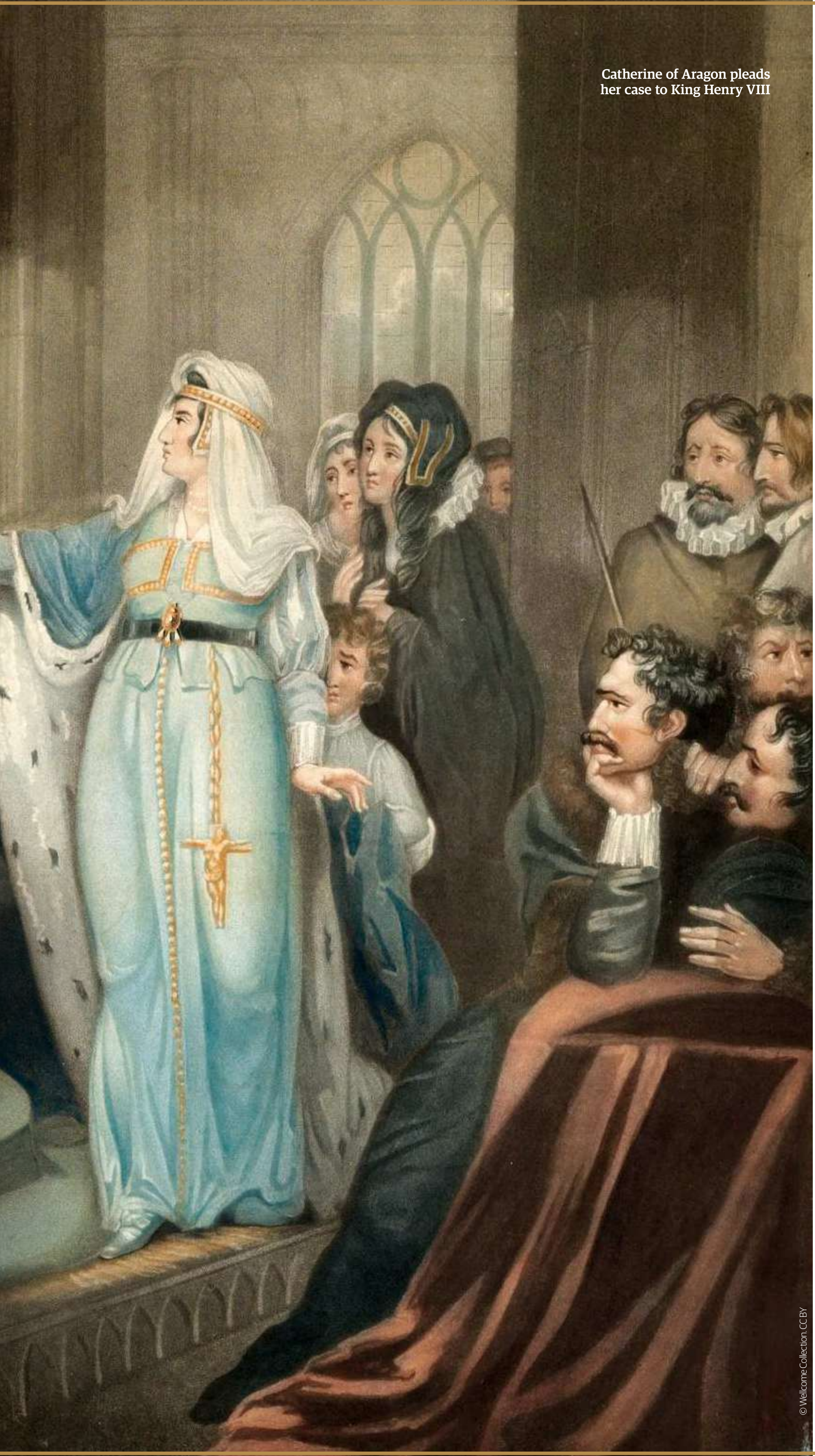
Where did all this leave Catherine, now middle-aged and dowdy? She was steadily becoming surplus to requirements. She turned increasingly to religion. Frequenters of the royal court noticed that she seldom attended festivities. Henry now had another companion more in tune with his love of extravagant display in the form of Thomas Wolsey, who gradually took charge of diplomacy and the formation of policy. In November, the Queen went into labour. The result was another girl who died within hours. The Tudor dynastic train had run into the buffers – or was it just a matrimonial siding?



CATHERINE VERSUS ANNE

Henry was a loyal, loving husband, but he needed a son more

Written by Derek Wilson



Catherine of Aragon pleads her case to King Henry VIII

© Wellcome Collection CC BY

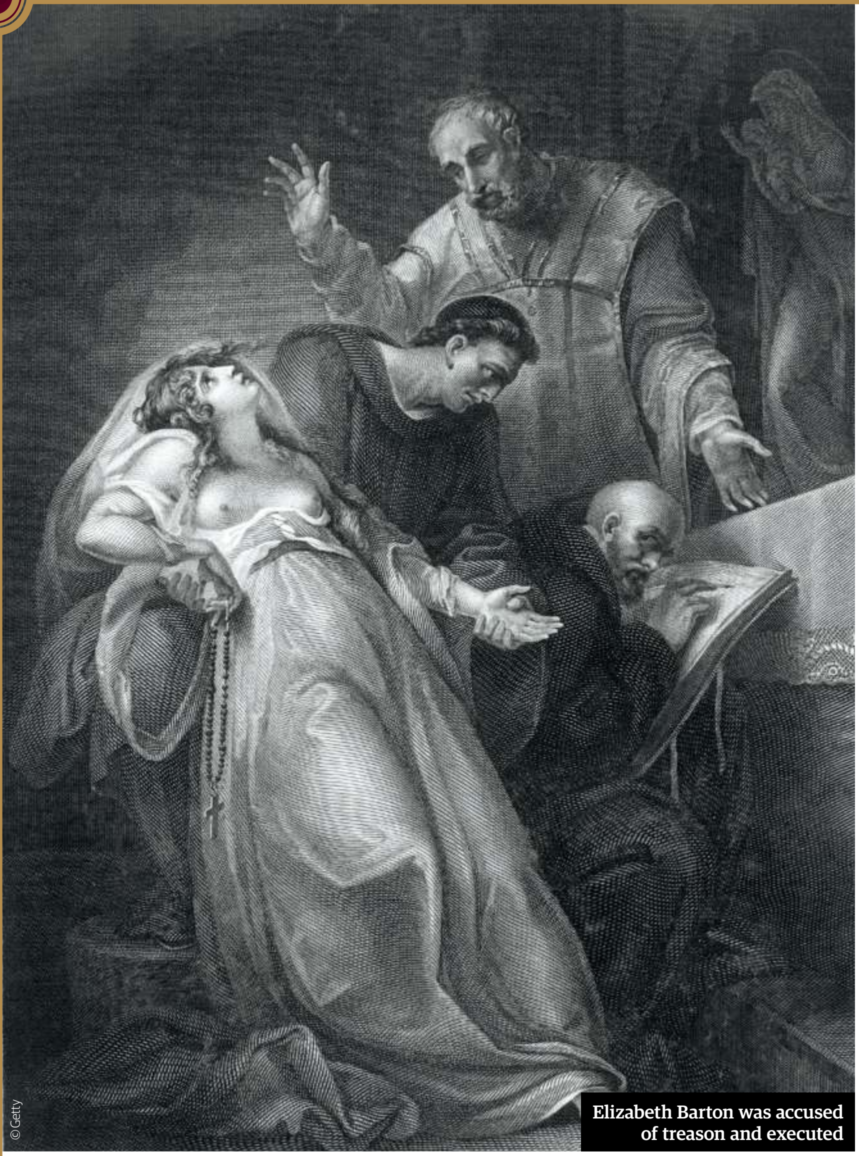
“By the time she was three years old, negotiations had already begun for her marriage to Arthur”

It goes without saying that princes and princesses were not free to follow their own desires when it came to marriage - such affairs were determined by politics. From their earliest days it was instilled into them that, above all else, their duty lay to their dynasty and their realm. This certainly made for emotional stress for many royal children, whose long-term fates were decided by the political calculations of parents, ministers and diplomats. On the other hand, since they had never known any other regimen, it wasn't an unbearable hardship for most royal heirs to subordinate their own interests to those of kin and country. Few young princesses, however, found this more difficult than Catherine, the youngest child of Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella of Castile.

She was born in 1485 and by the time she was three years old, negotiations had already begun for her marriage to Arthur, Prince of Wales, eldest son of Henry VII of England. At the time it was by no means certain that the union would actually take place; relations between the royal houses of Europe were volatile, and the treaty containing the marriage clause had to do with military alliance against France and the prevention of Henry's Yorkist rivals from gaining foreign support. The first Tudor had gained his crown by conquest and it was by no means certain that he would be able to cling on to it.

For his part, Henry had commercial interests in Europe that might have been compromised by too close a relationship with Aragon-Castile. Negotiations, therefore, dragged on and it wasn't until 1499 that the 13-year-old princess was married by proxy to her English husband (one year her junior). And it was another two years before she arrived in England.

She must have found England's damp airs something of a shock after the spacious palaces and sunlit orange groves of her native land. Worse was to come - much worse. She seems to have been favourably impressed by her fiancé, but they couldn't converse easily because they shared no common language. The couple were



Elizabeth Barton was accused of treason and executed

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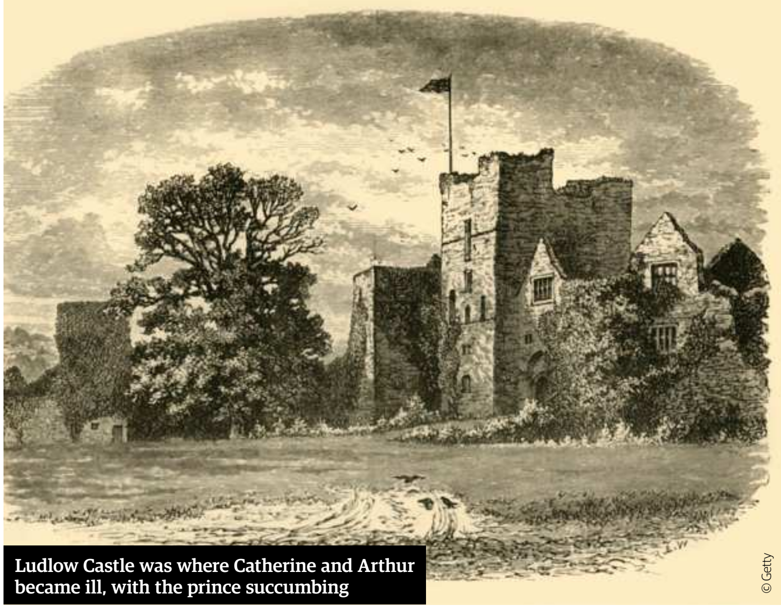

Ludlow Castle was where Catherine and Arthur became ill, with the prince succumbing

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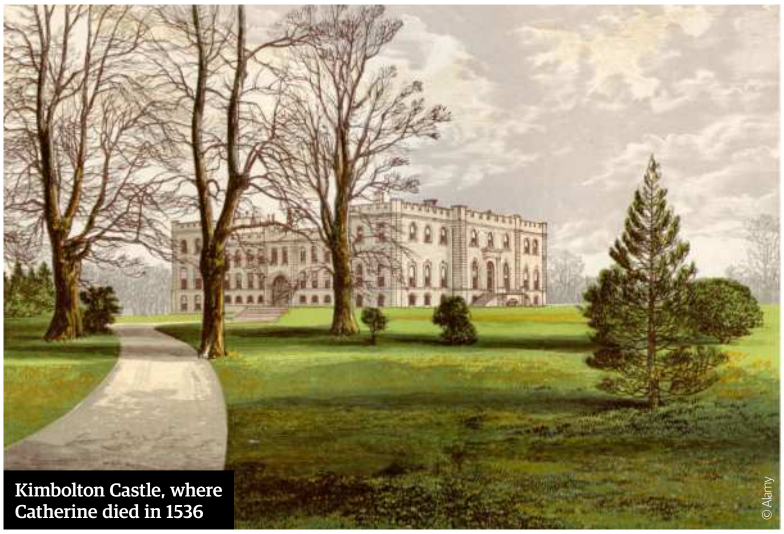


Kimbolton Castle, where Catherine died in 1536

© Alamy

welcomed into London by cheering crowds and a series of lavish banquets and entertainments followed, culminating in the grand wedding ceremony in St Paul's Cathedral. After a few days, the newlyweds set off for Ludlow Castle on the Welsh border because Henry VII decreed that the Prince of Wales should take up residence in his principality. There the couple both succumbed to a fever (perhaps the sweating sickness). Catherine recovered. Arthur did not. He died suddenly on 2 April. Catherine's marriage had lasted just four months and 16 days.

She now longed – and probably expected – to return home, but King Henry refused permission. Unwilling to part with the substantial dowry downpayment he had received from Ferdinand, he proposed a second wedding for the young widow. He had another son, the 13-year-old Henry, Duke of York; Catherine should now marry him.

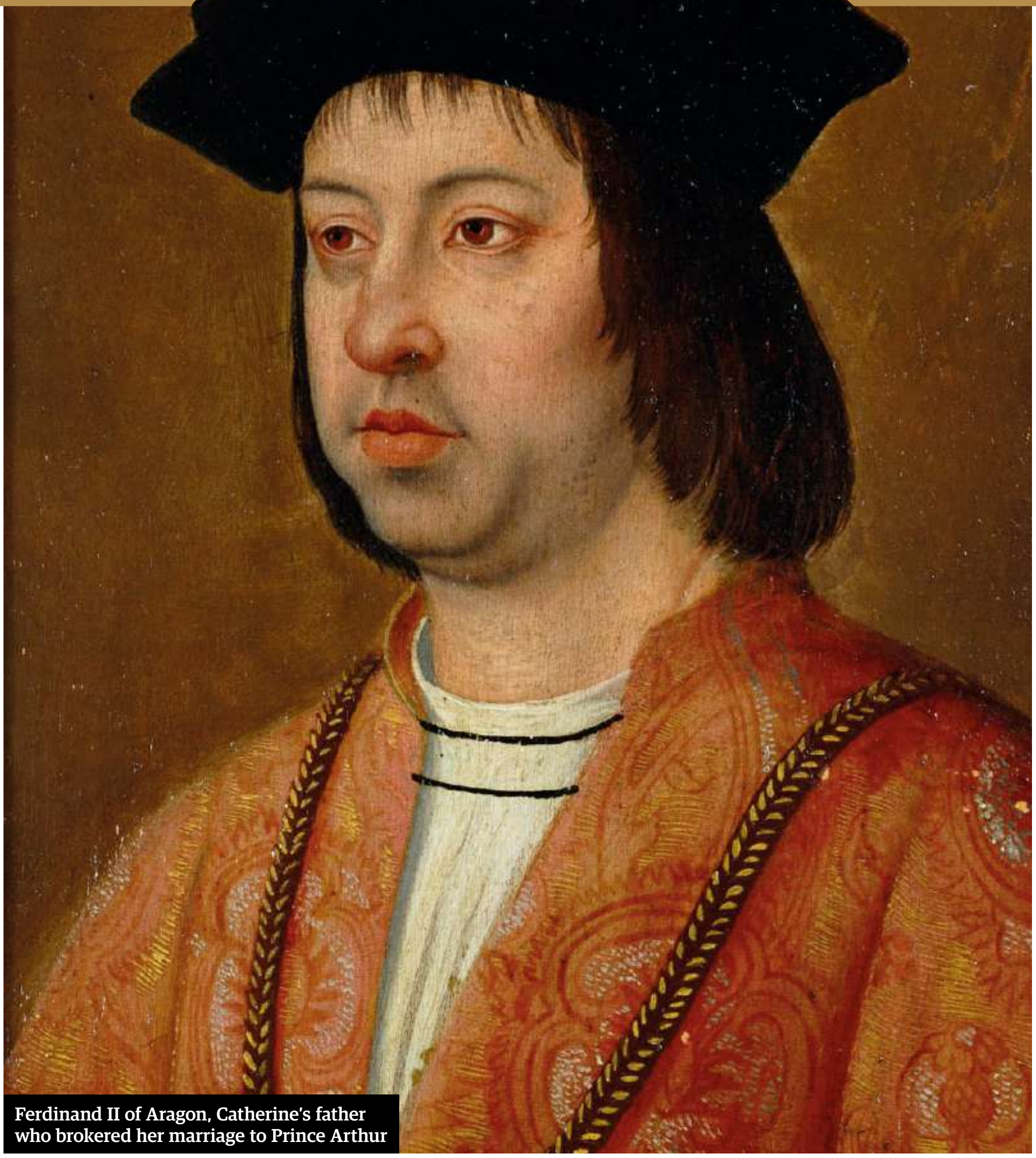
The next seven years were purgatorial for the princess. While her father and father-in-law entered into another round of protracted negotiations, she was held virtually as a hostage in England. She was homesick. The members of her Spanish entourage were unpopular. She complained frequently that King Henry kept her short of money and clothes. In November 1504 news came that her beloved mother had died.

But the following summer there came a glimmer of hope: Prince Henry, now of age to take responsibility for his future, was brought before the royal council to confirm his intention to marry Catherine. He declined. The decision was, in reality, his father's – Henry VII had decided to pursue a treaty with the Holy Roman Emperor that was more to his political and pecuniary advantage, and so his son was now to marry Princess Eleanor of Austria. Surely, there was nothing now to prevent Catherine's escape. Nothing, indeed, except the slowly grinding wheels of international diplomacy. Life dragged on wearily for Catherine while the English king kept his options open.

Then, at last, in April 1509, Henry VII died at Richmond Palace. One of the new king's first decisions was to revive his marriage to Catherine, and while he was urged on by his council, it is likely that this chimed with his own inclinations. One advantage was that he knew her; he wouldn't have to tie himself, sight-unseen, to some foreign lady. He was already showing signs of that egoism that would grow to massive proportions in the coming decades, and he would please himself rather than some foreign ally. He would put his own and his family's interests before those of the country (or, rather, he persuaded himself that the two were indistinguishable).

It seems likely that he had developed a respect and affection for his sister-in-law. She was attractive, well-educated, fun-loving (but certainly not frivolous) and well accomplished in the courtly arts. And one characteristic she had acquired as a result of her recent experiences was strong-mindedness, something Henry liked in his women – at least in his early years.

Contrary to populist narratives that smack more of gossip than responsible historiography, there is no substantiated evidence that Henry VIII indulged himself with a string of mistresses during the first decade of his married life. To assume his promiscuity is to misunderstand the complexity of the man and the circumstances of his private life.



Ferdinand II of Aragon, Catherine's father who brokered her marriage to Prince Arthur

Henry had two belief systems that largely governed his behaviour with women: he was sincerely religious and he was wedded to chivalric romance. Both conventional Catholicism and the courtly idealisation of women taught that eroticism was to be avoided. That isn't to say that the king never yielded to temptation, but he embarked on marriage with genuine affection for his wife, desiring a family life and, above all, aware of his responsibility to sire legitimate offspring for his dynasty. It was when this simply didn't happen that he began to look elsewhere and to convince himself that he was justified in doing so.

Catherine was 24 at the time of her second marriage. Ten years later she was approaching the end of her child-bearing years. She had undergone six pregnancies and the only infant to survive was Mary Tudor. Her husband, still in his 20s, athletic and full of macho energy, found himself tied to a dowdy middle-aged woman who had failed to fulfil the first duty of a royal wife (it was assumed that the sex of a child was determined by its mother). His desire for sexual gratification, thus, coincided with his genuine bewilderment about why God had turned his back on the Tudors.

> "HE WOULDN'T HAVE TO TIE HIMSELF, SIGHT-UNSEEN, TO SOME FOREIGN LADY"

Meanwhile, an upwardly mobile Norfolk family, the Boleyns, was reaching for the stars. Thomas Boleyn came from a mercantile family and laboured assiduously to enter and advance in royal service. He married a daughter of the Duke of Norfolk, gained access to Henry VIII's court and was attached to various diplomatic missions. When his daughters, Mary and Anne, reached reached their teens, he was able to place

BIBLE VERSUS BIBLE OR BIBLE VERSUS POPE?

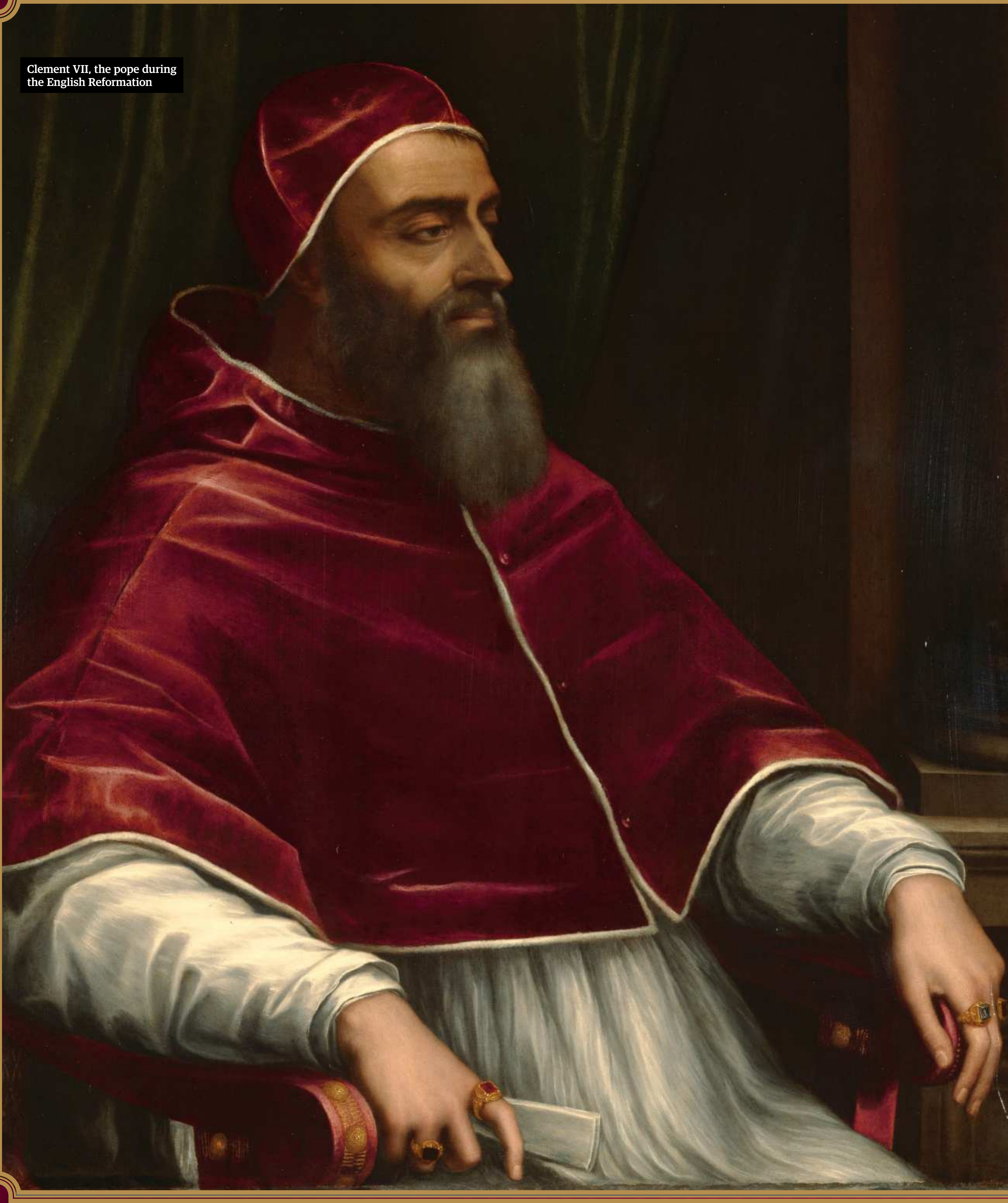
The king's Great Matter definitely wasn't straightforward

We cannot know who put into Henry's head the notion that the Bible provided the medicine that would cure him of his unwanted marriage. Anne was an enthusiastic reader of the French translation by Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, who completed his work on the Old Testament in 1528. Anne had come under the influence of his humanist circle during her years at the French court and will have known scholars who might have been able to point a possible way out of her lover's impasse.

However it came about, Henry discovered in Leviticus, an Old Testament treatise on ritual and ethical regulations, something that seemed to suit his purposes. Chapter 20, verse 21 read, "If a man takes his brother's wife, it is impurity; he has uncovered his brother's nakedness, they shall be childless." This proscription was among a list of rules designed to prevent complications over inheritance at a time when polygamy was rife. It was well known to 16th-century canon lawyers and, in order to clear the way for Prince Henry's espousal to Catherine back in 1503, Pope Julius II had dispensed Henry from it. Henry's argument was that no pope could set aside the clear teaching of holy Scripture.

But there was a snag: the text from another Old Testament law book, Dueteronomy 25:5, insisted that if a man died without issue, it was his brother's duty to marry the widow in order to provide heirs to his sibling's property. Since it was unthinkable that the Bible could contradict itself, the interpretation of these passages provided much meat for theologians and legists to get their teeth into.

The consensus among most scholars was that the Deuteronomy text enunciated the sole exception to the Leviticus rule. Unfortunately for Henry, it matched his situation perfectly. It goes without saying that he didn't accept it, and he went so far as to send his agents around several of Europe's universities and law schools in the hope of collecting favourable verdicts. As for the Deuteronomy text, he ignored it. Everything, therefore, turned on the papacy versus Leviticus – God's representative versus God's word. This issue of authority became the basis of the Reformation conflict.

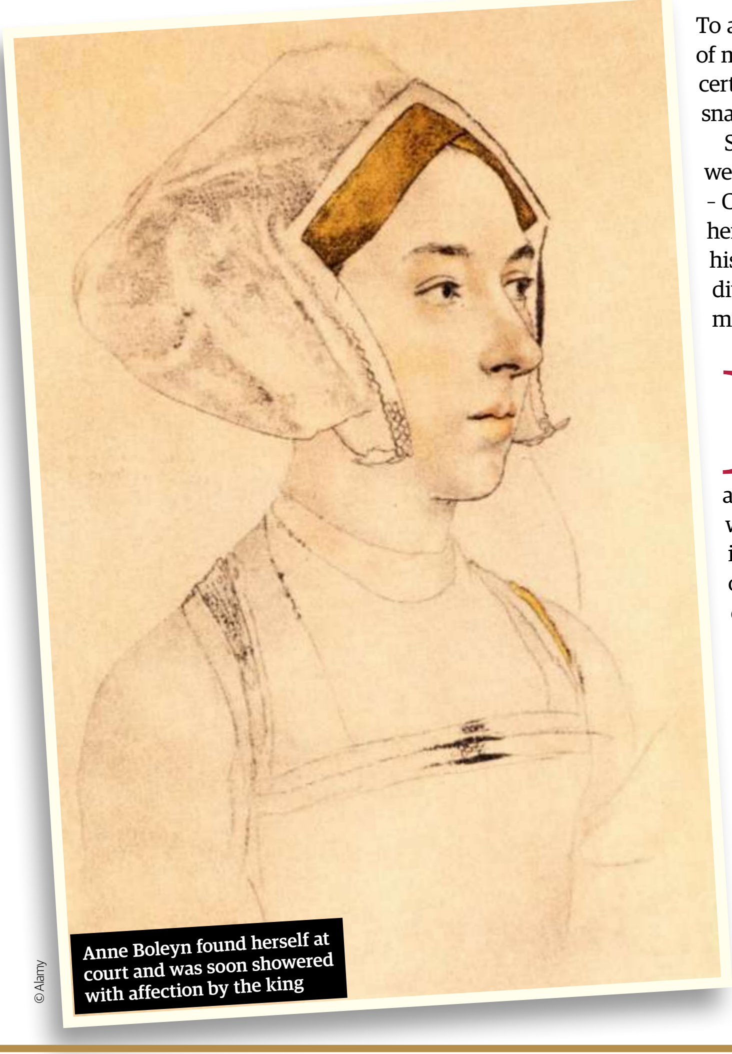


Clement VII, the pope during the English Reformation them in the entourages of Henry VIII's wife and daughter. Royal courts were places that ambitious parents placed their daughters to 'finish' their education - and also to meet wealthy, titled potential husbands. They were also places where morals tended to be lax. Mary earned a reputation for being free with her favours; one of her affairs was probably with King Francis when she and Anne were at the French court around 1515. Back in England some five years later, she became Henry VIII's mistress. By 1522 Anne was also in the English court as one of the queen's attendants, and at some stage Henry transferred his attention to the younger sister.

By 1524, sexual relations between him and Catherine had come to an end. That meant that the dynasty had come to an end. There's no reason to believe that Henry didn't feel this deeply, and nor can it be disputed that he felt deeply for Anne. The growth of his affections (and his frustration) is timetabled in a series of love letters written between mid 1527 and autumn 1528, all telling the story of an importunate lover who initially fears rejection and is desperate for favours. He later offers all manner of inducements, including instituting Anne as official mistress. At length he expresses his hope of uniting with his beloved in marriage. Clearly Anne held out as long as possible. Was this cold calculation, playing hard to get in order to get the top prize? We can't know; we can only conjecture.

It seems understandable for her to show extreme caution - there was so much at stake and thrones were dangerous places for those who got too close. In addition, there was her relationship with her sister. There was no love lost between the Boleyn girls; Anne despised Mary for her loose morals and had no desire to be tarred with the same brush. If she became intimate with a man, it would have to be with marriage as the end in view. But if that man was the king...? It's quite easy to see why she took her time. Perhaps, in the end, she had no choice.

"SHE RESPONDED THAT GOD HAD CALLED HER TO BE A QUEEN, NOT A NUN"


Anne Boleyn found herself at court and was soon showered with affection by the king

© Alamy

To accept the king was her only chance of married happiness. Henry would certainly not have stood by to see her snapped up by someone else.

So, by the mid 1520s three 'vehicles' were speeding along converging roads - Catherine's inability to provide a male heir, Henry's passion for Anne, and his conviction that he should have, by divine right, whatever he wanted. A monumental collision was inevitable.

Initially, Henry tried the softly softly approach, promising Catherine generous treatment if she would retire to a nunnery and renounce the crown. Most wives would have bowed to the inevitable, but Catherine was made of sterner stuff. Self respect, religious conviction and dynastic pride all conspired to stiffen her resistance, and she responded that God had called her to be a queen, not a nun. She insisted that Henry's wish to terminate the marriage should be referred to the pope and that the head of her family, Emperor Charles V (Catherine's nephew), should be fully informed.

The prospect of having his private life scrutinised by the two leaders of western Christendom outraged Henry. Perhaps this was the beginning of the road that led to the Act in Restraint of Appeals in 1533, which declared that "this realm of England is an empire entire of itself". Any appeal to Rome was never going to result in a decision in Henry's favour. Even if Pope Clement VII proved pliable, he was under the thumb of the emperor who ruled half of Italy (the Kingdom of Naples) and whose troops sacked and pillaged Rome in 1527.

The man in the middle of these irreconcilable forces and charged with fulfilling the king's wishes was Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. As papal legate he was the senior English churchman and as Lord Chancellor he held the top political office. As the power behind the throne since the beginning of the reign, he had become adept at giving Henry what he wanted, but the 'King's Great Matter' proved to be his nemesis. Catherine and Anne both mistrusted him and Anne in particular entertained a deep loathing that could scarcely fail to influence her royal lover.

As rumours spread, public outrage became vocal. Catherine attracted popular sympathies, while Anne was referred to as the 'French whore' and was accused of using witchcraft to win over Henry. Anti-Boleyn protests turned into riots in some places, and it was even said that an attempt had been made on Anne's life. In Kent, a self-appointed prophetess, Elizabeth Barton, attracted crowds when she foretold death and destruction if Henry married Anne; this 'Nun of Kent' was hanged for treason in 1534. As late as 1533, when the king took Anne on a royal progress it had to be aborted because of many demonstrations.

By this time the convoluted saga of the 'divorce' had claimed another prominent victim. Throughout the years 1527-30, Wolsey strove with might and main to bring about the annulment of Henry's marriage by judicial means. His first attempt, in May 1527, to decide the case secretly in his legatine court, was almost a farce. The judges, though hand-picked, failed to agree. All the participants knew that Catherine could - and would - appeal an adverse verdict to Rome. To cap it all, knowledge of this clandestine tribunal was all over the royal court within hours.

Stage two of the campaign was to have the case tried in England but before a special legate sent from Rome. It was another 16 months before the papal appointee, Carinal Lorenzo Campeggio, arrived. What he failed to tell anyone was that he was under strict orders from Clement VII not to make a final pronouncement, but simply to report back to the pope. It was 21 June 1529 before the court convened and now, for the first time, Catherine was given the opportunity to make her plea publicly. She grabbed it. She went down on her knees before the king:

"Sir, I beseech you for all the loves there hath been between us, and for the love of God, let me have justice and right, take of me some pity and compassion, for I am a poor woman

and a stranger born out of your dominions… This 20 years have I been your true wife, or more, and by me ye have had divers children, although it hath pleased God to call them out of the world, which has been no fault of mine… If there be any just cause by the law that ye can allege against me, either of dishonesty or any other impediment to banish and put me from you, I am well content to depart, to my great shame and disparagement, and if there be none, then here I most lowly beseech you let me remain in my former estate and receive justice at your princely hands."

There was more in the same vein before she concluded, "to God I commit my case", rose, bowed and left the court, refusing all instructions to return. When the news reached Pope Clement he revoked his commission to Campeggio and ordered the combatants in the case to appear personally before him in Rome.

There was no way that Henry was going to submit to this humiliation. He was being denied something he passionately wanted - a unique experience for him. Anne was scarcely less angry and she vented her fury on the king. All he could do was strip Wolsey of his offices and despatch him to his diocese as Archbishop of York, the only position in Church or state he was allowed to retain. In November 1530 the cardinal was arrested and began a return journey to London to face treason charges, only to die en route. Anne celebrated his death with a court masque.

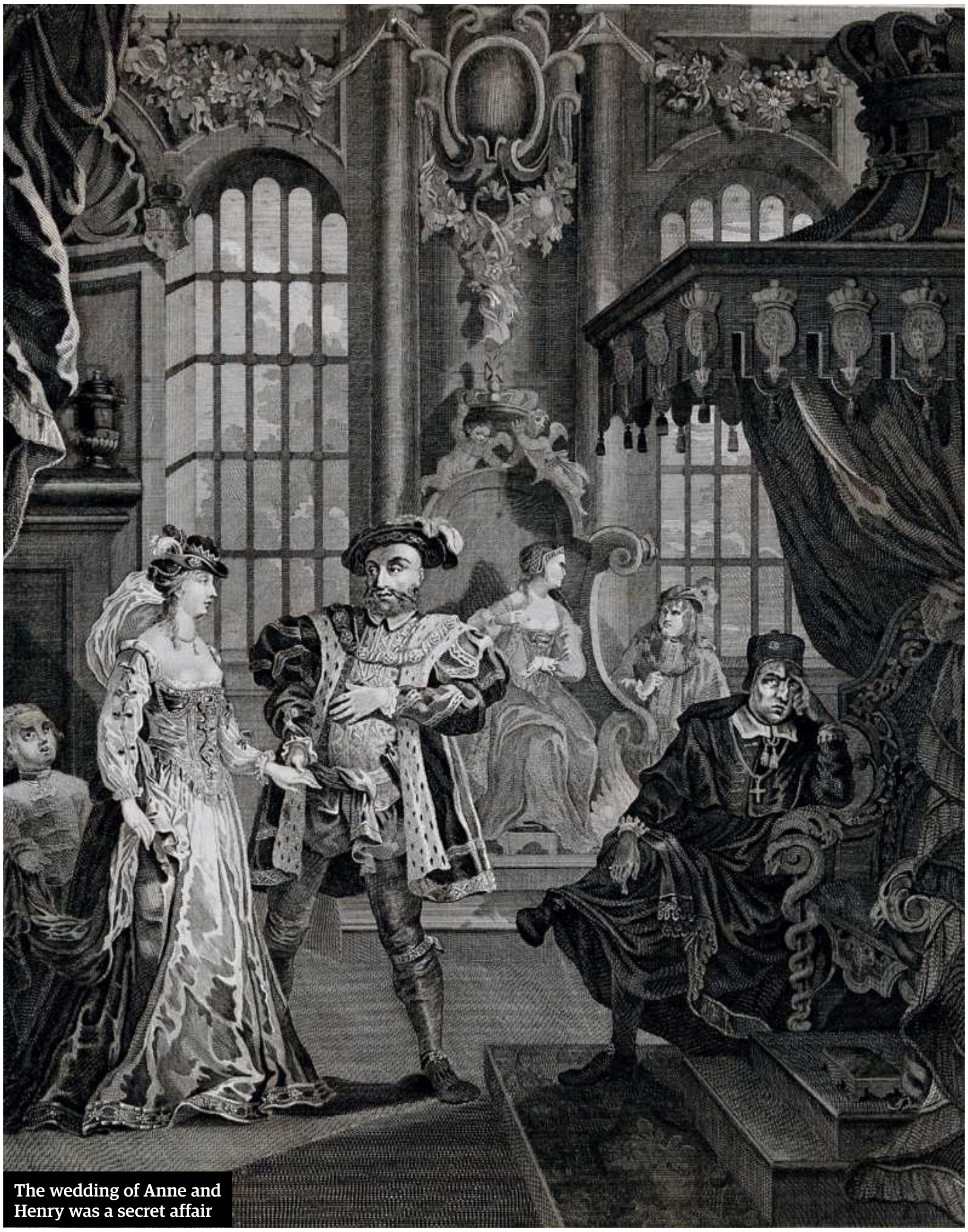
It is worth noting that these events took place against a background of greatly increased religious tension. For the first time there was an official campaign against the flood of Lutheran literature coming into the country. Included on the list of books Wolsey ordered to be burned was William Tyndale's English New Testament, and just how fraught and complex the situation had now become is indicated by an incident sometime in 1529. Anne had acquired a copy of Tyndale's recently published tract *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, which urged kings to recover authority usurped by the papacy. She showed it to Henry, who was so delighted with it that he tried to recruit the author to his propaganda team. Thus, the king was, at the same time denouncing Tyndale as a heretic and seeking to employ him.

"He was trapped – between two very angry women and between rival political factions in Church and state"

He was trapped - between two very angry women and between rival political factions in Church and state: traditionalists and reformers. He knew very well the radical solution he wanted, but how was he to bring it about? Was there no one who could sever the Gaudian knot?

Enter Thomas Cromwell. This former agent of Wolsey's avoided falling with his master and rose rapidly in royal service. He brought to the situation a radical, evangelical perspective, a fresh mind, a tireless energy and a ruthless spirit. In 1531 he gained a seat in the House of Commons and was soon drafting and championing revolutionary legislation that radically changed the relationship of Church and state.

By autumn 1532, Henry and Anne were living as husband and wife. Thomas Cranmer, a Cambridge academic, was appointed archbishop of Canterbury, and he issued an annulment of the king's first marriage, and was poised to permit the second as soon as the pope had endorsed the appointment. Meanwhile the Reformation Parliament had taken over from Convocation, the ecclesiastical legislative body, all powers that had tied the English Church to Rome and kept it independent of the civil law courts. A swingeing fine was imposed on the clergy for the crime of praemunire (upholding papal jurisdiction). Royal



The wedding of Anne and Henry was a secret affair

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agents were despatched to conduct visitations into the conduct of monks and parish clergy. At long last, everything was going Henry's way.

Then, days into the new year, Anne told him that she was pregnant. Now there was a new urgency: it was vital that the child should be legitimate. The couple were secretly married but it was not until the end of May that Cranmer's appointment was confirmed, the marriage to Catherine declared void and the marriage to Anne openly announced. Without delay the new queen was crowned, after processing to Westminster Abbey through sullen crowds.

On 7 September Anne was safely delivered of her baby, but there was a problem: it was a girl. Henry was disappointed – disappointed and angry. After all that he had been through to secure the succession, he was no nearer to achieving his goal. Husband and wife lost no time in trying again, but the next child was stillborn. And so was the next. Now totally disenchanted, Henry was soon on the lookout for another wife. Inevitably, word on the street was that God was punishing the king for his treatment of Catherine.

And what of the former queen all this time? Catherine was as stubborn as her ex-husband. She constantly refused to recognise her changed state, insisting that her small band of attendants continued to use her royal titles. By royal order she was moved around the country to one rural residence after another. For long periods of time her daughter, Mary, was denied access to her. In 1534 the princess was bastardised by the Act of Succession, which pronounced Henry's children by Anne to be heirs to the throne and pronounced it treason for anyone to advance Mary's claim.

> “She was convinced that Anne had contrived to poison her”

The finale to this long, appalling drama that had dragged on for 11 years came with brutish suddenness. On 7 January 1536, Catherine died at Kimbolton Castle, on the edge of the Cambridgeshire fens. She had lived long enough to hear of the execution of several friends and supporters who, like her, had refused to sign the Oath of Succession. Bitter to the very end, she was convinced that Anne had contrived to poison her.

In fact, Catherine's death was the last thing the queen needed. She had lost Henry's affection and he was now pursuing Jane Seymour, one of her ladies-in-waiting. Catherine was now Anne's insurance policy; as long as she lived there, was no question of the king finding some way to terminate his second marriage. There would be calls for him to return to his 'true wife' and even Henry would probably be unwilling to go through all that again. 17 days later the king had a bad fall from his horse in the tiltyard and was unconscious for a couple of hours. The news came as a shock to the pregnant wife and she claimed that it brought on a miscarriage five days later. Henry now had no incentive to continue on his current marriage.

Thomas Cromwell was aware of this and will certainly have recalled what had happened to Wolsey for failing to free the king from an unwanted relationship. He now set about finding (or manufacturing) evidence of Anne's adultery. Anne, for her part, also entered into intrigues to bring down the minister. It was a battle to the death – and Cromwell won.

On 1 May, Anne's accused lovers were taken to the Tower. She joined them the next day. On 15 May she was tried and found guilty of adultery and plotting her husband's death. On the 18 May, Cranmer obligingly adjudged that Henry's second marriage was voided by virtue of Anne's pre-contract with another man. The next morning, the queen was beheaded, protesting her innocence to the last. So ended a long and sordid story that could not have been improved on in fiction. Many have tried.

BROTHERS IN ARMS?

Jane's siblings were more than ready to meddle on her behalf

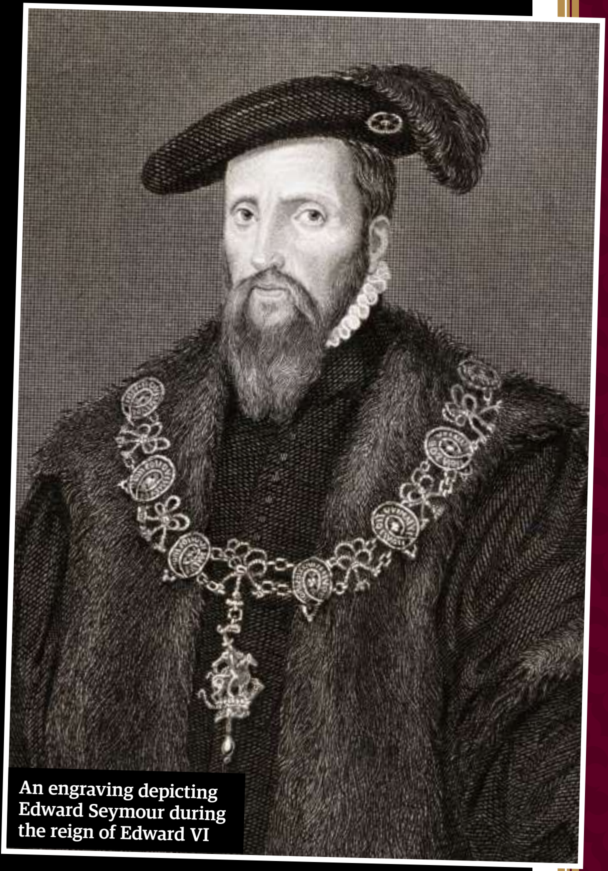
In around 1529, Jane Seymour made her first appearance at court where, like Anne Boleyn before her, she joined the household of Catherine of Aragon. She later transferred to Anne's service, while two of her brothers, Edward and Thomas, were rising stars at court.

The children of a Wiltshire knight, Sir John Seymour, it was these brothers – ambitious for power and preferment – who were responsible for actively encouraging Henry VIII's pursuit of their sister when he began to tire of his Boleyn wife. Described as being "of middle stature and no great beauty", it was doubtless with the connivance of her brothers that Jane made a great show of her modesty.

Though Jane was not believed to be "a woman of great wit", she understood her situation only too well. Chapuys, the ambassador of the Holy Roman Empire, had been told that she had been "well tutored" and warned not to give in to the king's advances "unless he makes her his queen, upon which the damsel is quite resolved".

By January 1536 Jane was receiving "great presents" from Henry, but she refused a gift of money, declaring to the king that "there was no treasure in this world that she valued as much as her honour". Predictably, his ardour for Jane "marvellously increased", and in order to prove his love to her he insisted on using her brother Edward as a chaperone. He even moved the apartments of Edward and his wife closer to his own to facilitate easier access.

Anne's execution paved the way for Henry and Jane's marriage, but tragically Jane died just 12 days after her son's birth in 1537. In time her brothers attempted to seize control and influence their nephew, Edward VI, but in a similar manner as the Boleyns, both Edward and Thomas ended their lives on the executioner's block on Edward's orders.


An engraving depicting Edward Seymour during the reign of Edward VI

THE FRENCH APPRENTICESHIP

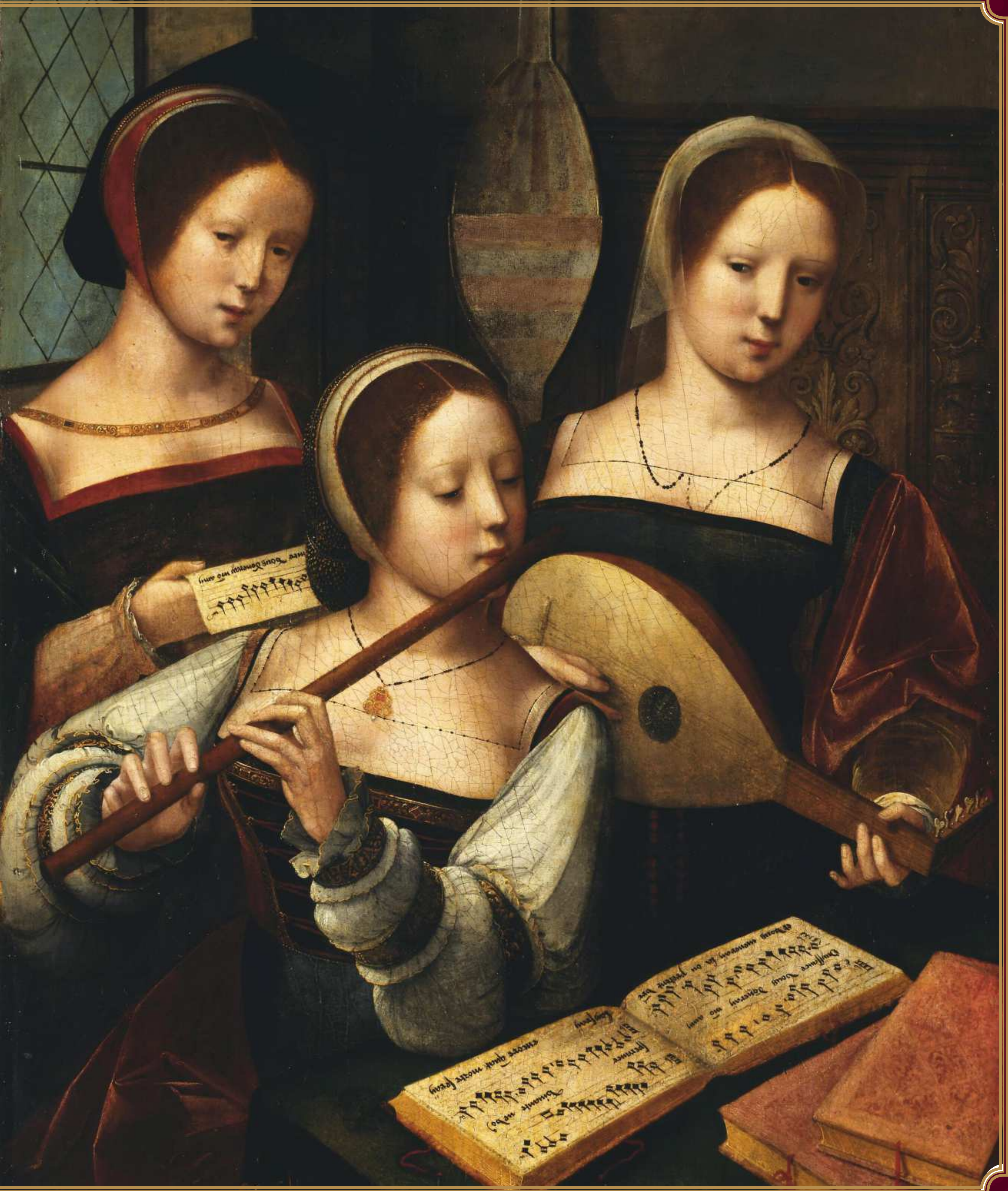
Anne spent seven years in France, learning the tricks of the courtly trade and developing sophisticated tastes. How would they influence her reception at Henry VIII's court?

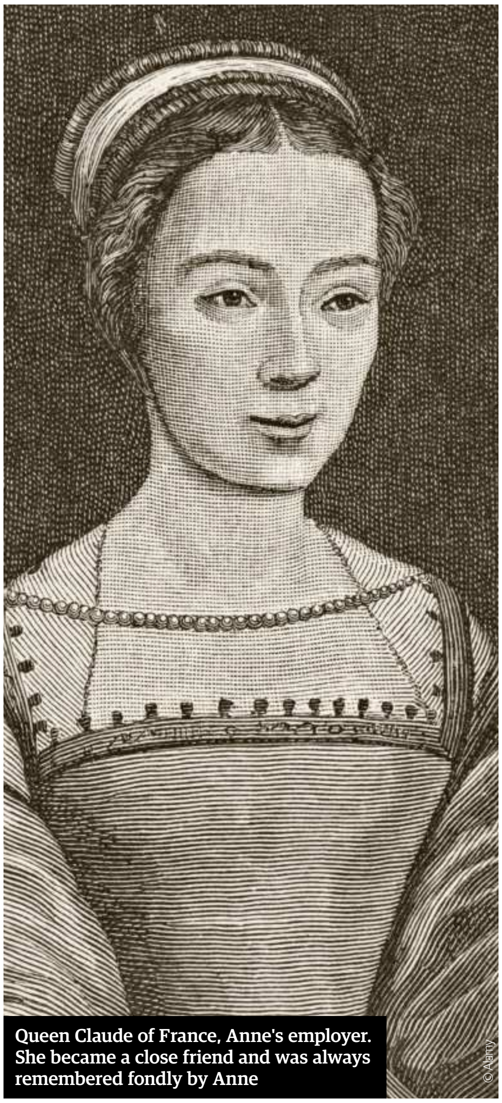
Written by Jon Wright

A French contemporary paid Anne Boleyn what he must have regarded as the highest compliment: "No one would ever have taken her to be English by her manners, but a native-born Frenchwoman." Anne's immersion in life across the Channel had, indeed, begun at a tender age. A short spell at the glamorous court of Archduchess Margaret, governor of the Habsburg Low Countries, got the ball rolling when Anne was just 13 years old and then it was off to the even more sumptuous treats available in France. In an attempt to thaw out increasingly frosty Anglo-French relations, Henry VIII agreed to a marriage between his sister, Mary, and the French king, Louis XII. Promising, well-born English young women with a decent command of the local language were required as escorts and Anne easily made the grade. She had almost certainly settled into her new posting by the time of the royal marriage celebrations in the autumn of 1514 but then, just 82 days later, tragedy struck. Louis XII died. It was assumed that Mary's English attendants would all return home but Anne was invited to stay behind.

Anne's myth-making critics - never in short supply - have suggested that this had something to do with Anne catching the eye of the new king, Francis I: a ruler, to be sure, who always had a wandering eye. In fact, there is no reliable evidence whatsoever of any sexual impropriety. The rather less sensational likelihood is that Anne hit it off with the new queen, Claude, who, as well as being of a similar age, admired Anne's abilities, decorum and virtue. Claude - "goodness without sin" as one sycophant put it - would simply not have tolerated one of her companions indulging in lewd recreations. This represents a hefty blow to the caricature, peddled most famously and venomously by the Jesuit Nicholas Sander, of an incorrigibly whore-ish Anne. Sander suggested that Anne had been packed off to France in the first place to avoid the gossipy consequences of sleeping with her family's butler and that she was referred to by the French as "the English mare because of her shameless behaviour" in their country. This was all, to use the technical term, tosh.

As it happens, Anne seems to have led rather a sedate, even studious life as a member of Claude's household. The queen had a gift for falling pregnant and, during these spells, preferred to spend time at Blois and Amboise. She did not relish the exertions required by the social whirl and, while resentful of the king's official mistresses, was content to let them take centre stage at many public events. This did not preclude lengthy spells in Paris and Claude, with Anne in tow, enjoyed a good deal of travel: journeying to Lyons or Marseilles to welcome Francis home after various overseas adventures, for example, or participating in royal progresses. Claude and her household's members naturally attended





Queen Claude of France, Anne's employer. She became a close friend and was always remembered fondly by Anne

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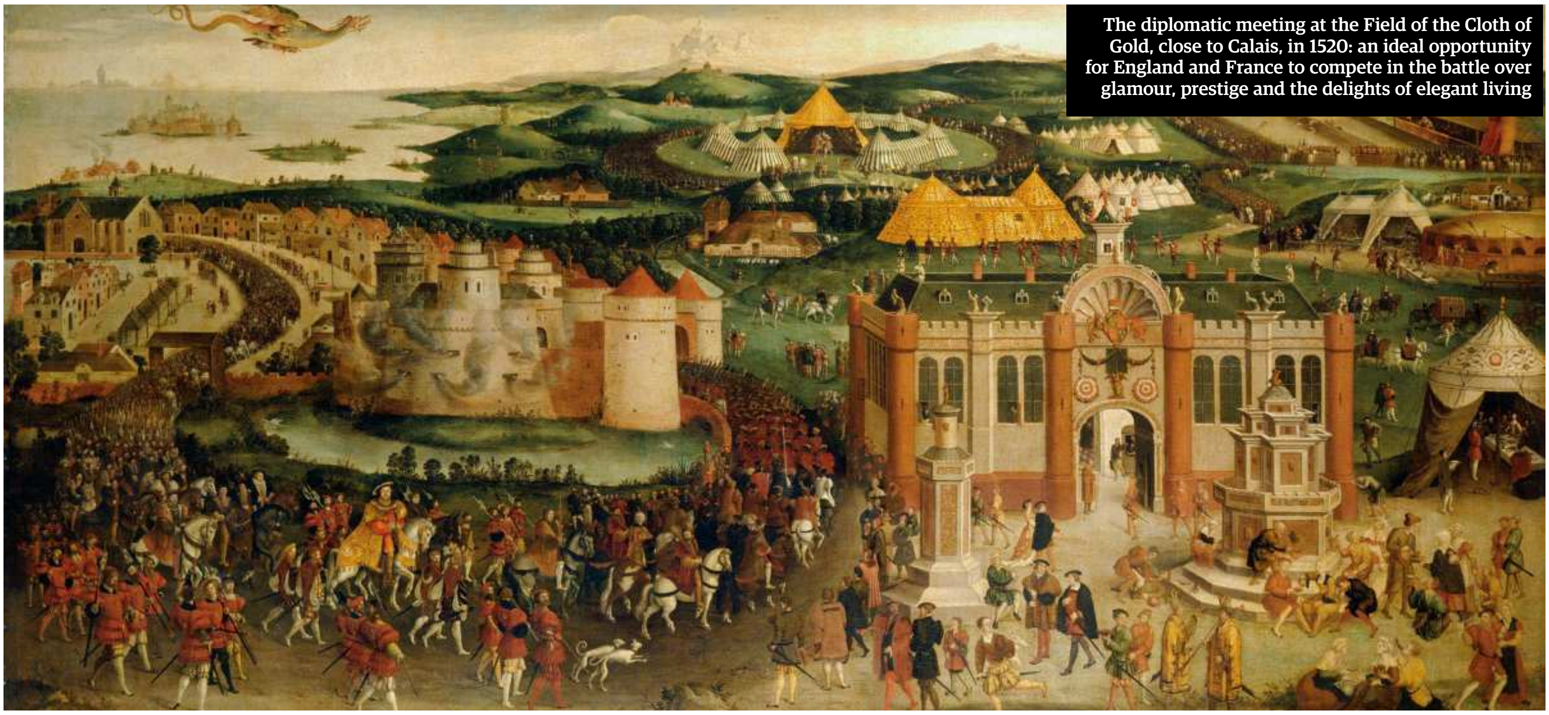
key events such as the christening of Claude's son Henry (the future Henry II) in 1519, and the sumptuous diplomatic festivities at the Field of the Cloth of Gold in June 1520. Claude was not some meek bystander in French politics – no one was allowed to forget her powerful status as the duchess of Brittany (a position that, in some ways, brought her close to Francis in terms of prestige). Anne breathed in this aspect of Claude's household, too, whether in relative seclusion in the Loire Valley or, at the heart of things, in Paris. A genuine fondness developed between Claude and Anne – the queen is reported to have been devastated when Anne returned to England – but Claude was also an exemplar of a new kind of French queen: one who paid great attention to projecting female influence and instructing her charges in the nuts and bolts of how the courtly system worked. Anne was not the power-crazed, over-sexed harlot of legend, but nor was she some wide-eyed ingenue. She was grateful for everything her mistress could teach her and, as luck would have it, this was a period when the role of women at the French court was entering a transformative, dynamic phase.

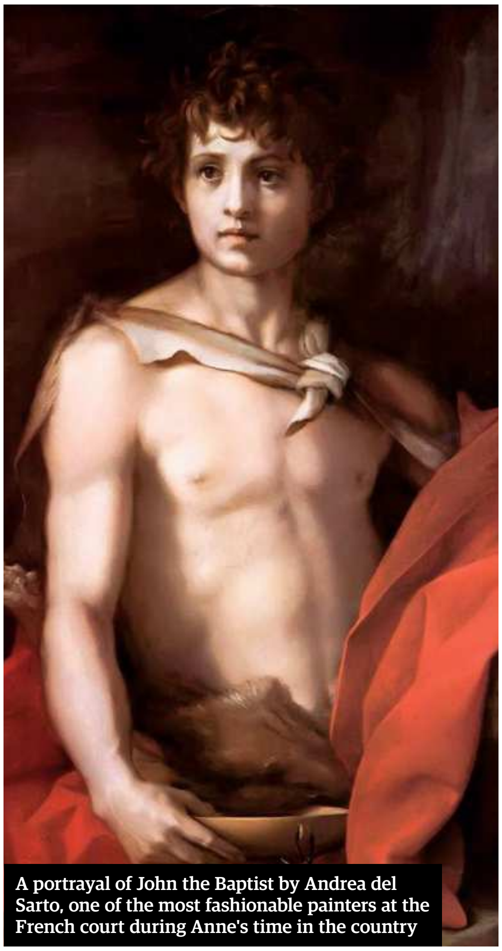
On paper, the king's household could look like the font of all French power. It was always considerably larger than the queen's establishment and was where the business of state – from the hatching of plots to the granting of patronage and petitions – was usually conducted. A significant transition was already underway, however. In 1490, the queen's household was home to around 19 ladies- and maids-in-waiting, plus small groups of women focused on specific aspects of royal life: six were dedicated to musical exploits, 13 kept an eye on culinary matters, five dealt with travel arrangements, etc. A total of 109 members made up the formal household – in addition to the men, who had final say when it came to granting access, health matters, finances and so on. Before the century ended, Anne of Brittany, wife of Charles VIII and then Louis XII, took steps to expand the household – a process that continued after her death in 1514. By 1523 (just a couple of years after Anne Boleyn had left for England), the queen's household had 285 members.

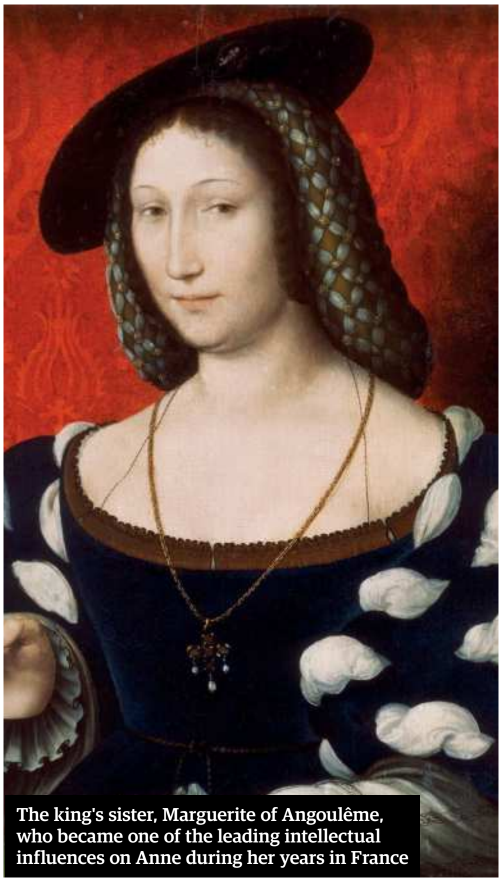
A change in ethos was even more important. The perception of courtly ladies as little more than attractive appendages was falling out of fashion – a trend with origins across the Alps in Italy. It was still deemed absolutely necessary for women at court to behave decorously but a more relaxed approach was taken to conversation between the sexes and it dawned on the French that women might actually have interesting things to say. This was very much linked to the so-called 'Querelle des femmes', a cultural debate that looked long and hard at female capacities, from their ability to govern to their worthwhile engagement in the era's intellectual and artistic endeavours. It would be anachronistic to define this as a forerunner of modern feminism, but from as early as the first decades of the 15th century Christine de Pizan was making the case for a more enlightened appreciation of female talents and potential (her famous *The Book of the City of Ladies* was hugely influential through the 15th century and was first translated and printed in English in 1521. Needless to say, not all the menfolk were delighted by such female aspirations. Blaise de Monluc later grumbled that "misfortune has it that in France women



The diplomatic meeting at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, close to Calais, in 1520: an ideal opportunity for England and France to compete in the battle over glamour, prestige and the delights of elegant living interfere in too many matters... the king should shut the mouths of women who speak at court... from them come all the stories and malicious gossip." Others were rather pleased to be able to chat about something other than their hunting exploits or the curious pastimes of their female companions. During Anne's time in France, a more confident female role was championed by an impressive trio of leading lights, all of whom may well have served as role models for the young woman from Hever Castle. The king's mother, Louise of Savoy, was a formidable figure who did not suffer fools gladly and acquitted herself well during short spells as France's regent. The king's sister, Marguerite of Angoulême, was renowned as a gifted scholar with a sideline (mainly exhibited after Anne's time in France) in humorous stories that challenged ideas about female social roles and poked fun at the follies of men. Nor should we underestimate Queen Claude who, behind the humble facade, was no slouch when it came to championing her causes. They all lived in the shadow of another royal, Anne of France, sister of (and sometime regent for) King Charles VIII who, in written advice to her daughter, stressed the need for propriety and the advantages of not becoming a blabbermouth, but also saw good sense in educating her attendants as fully as possible (even an interest in diplomacy was encouraged) and positioning the queen's household as a significant node of political power. Good queenship was performative queenship.

We know next to nothing about the details of Anne Boleyn's activities in France but she patently took full advantage of an environment in which high-born women could cultivate their talents, keep up to date with cultural trends, and, as it were, let their hair down, just a little, in the shaping of their public personae. Beyond question, Anne racked up an impressive number of achievements: attempting to strike the delicate balance between assertiveness and accepting the constraints of a male-dominated milieu. Anne was renowned as a fine musician with mastery of the lute, flute, harp, rebec and keyboards. One of her more ardent fans boasted that "when she sang, like a second Orpheus, she would have made bears and wolves attentive". This fitted nicely into the music-loving court of Francis I and it would transfer very nicely to England. One of the most precious artefacts associated with Anne is a collection of French and Low Countries songs that had a significant impact on the Tudor musical tradition. Dancing, meanwhile, was commonly acknowledged as the most desirable courtly talent of all. It allowed one to appraise the health and intellect of one's partner and ensure that, as one rather frank commentator put it, he did not "emit an unpleasant odour such as of bad meat". Every astute courtier knew that the dance floor was the best way the begin the courtship

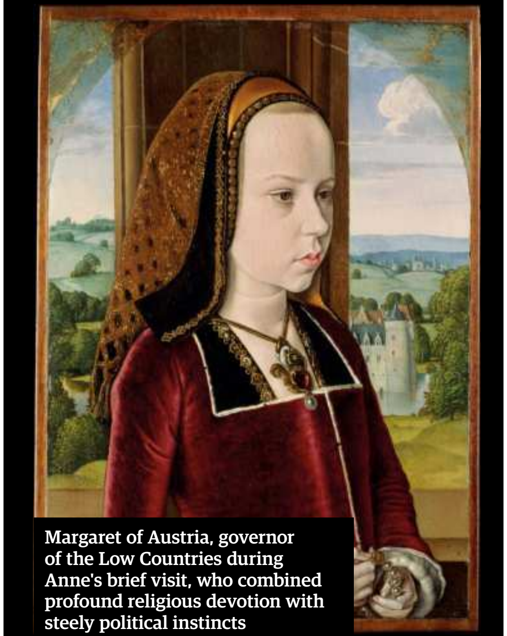

A portrayal of John the Baptist by Andrea del Sarto, one of the most fashionable painters at the French court during Anne's time in the country


The king's sister, Marguerite of Angoulême, who became one of the leading intellectual influences on Anne during her years in France

STARTING OUT

There was no finer place for Anne to make her entrance onto the European courtly stage than the Low Countries. A paragon of female rule and learning, Margaret of Austria, was in charge

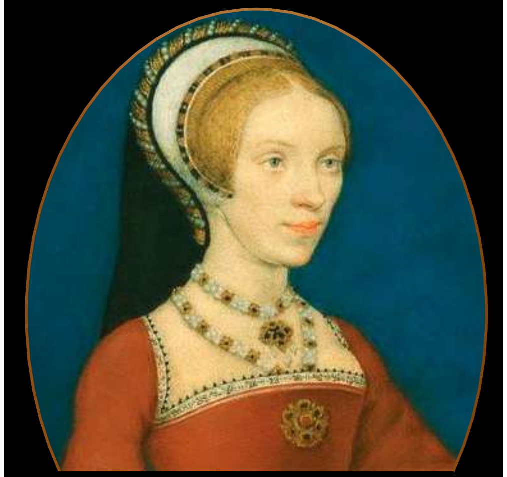
Anne's father, Thomas Boleyn, secured a prestigious diplomatic posting to the Low Countries in 1512. While there, he managed to arrange a much-sought-after courtly position for his daughter, who arrived in 1513. The ruler, Margaret of Austria, was immediately impressed. Anne, she wrote, was "bright and pleasant for her young age" and, she confided to Thomas, "I am more beholden to you for having sent her to me than you are to me." Anne's stay at the court in Mechelen was only brief, but Anne could not have wished for a more inspiring role model. Margaret proved herself an able diplomat and a discerning patron of literature, the arts and architecture. Figures such as Erasmus (attracted by Margaret's spectacular library) were regular visitors; the music of the era's greatest composers, including Josquin Desprez, met with the highest praise; and the court was often lauded as one of the most glamorous in Europe. Three other future queens served alongside Anne in Margaret's household, and luminaries such as Margaret's nephew, the future Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, were often to be seen milling around the corridors of power.


Margaret of Austria, governor of the Low Countries during Anne's brief visit, who combined profound religious devotion with steely political instincts

Dressing to Impress

Anne Boleyn was not a spendthrift clotheshorse but she appears to have had a well-honed fashion sense that usually went down well in both France and England

How splendid it would be to have a confirmed image of Anne during her time in France, but she was young and of no great importance so hardly qualified as a magnet for artists and portraitists. We have to make do with conjecture. One written account, provided after the events, offers a rather lovely description of one of Anne's outfits: she opted for a blue velvet cape tipped with gold bells, which covered a blue and silver vest and a surcoat of washed silk lined with miniver. The ensemble was topped and tailed by a gold-coloured headpiece and a pair of diamond-studded brodequins. Anne's passion for fashion was given full rein during her courtship with Henry and often retained a French flavour. Saddles "in the French style" proved popular – covered with black velvet, fringed with silk and gold, and "graven with antique work". Anne's tastes appear to have influenced the court and, in 1535, Lady Lisle was demanding that her agents pick up lots of hats of "the kind that the ladies of France use [sic] to wear, for the ladies here in the habitements follow the mode of France".

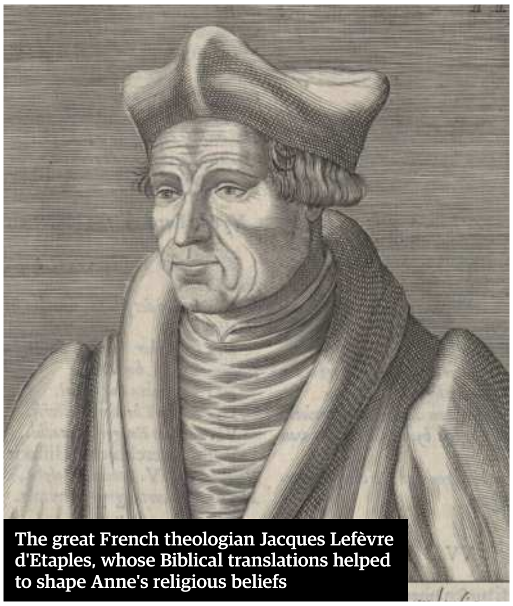


The so-called French hood - a rounded bonnet worn quite far back on the head with the familiar black fabric draping down the back of the neck - had, despite what one often reads, been introduced to England before Anne's return in the early 1520s

> "The perception of courtly ladies as little more than attractive appendages was falling out of fashion"

of a future wife. She might be won by the "good temper and grace displayed while dancing" and, on a more practical level, the old matrimonial hunting grounds had become less appealing: "ladies do not like to be present at fencing or tennis lest a splintered sword or a blow from a ball should cause them injury". It was best to know the difference between your pavanes and your galliards, as Anne assuredly did.

Anne also managed to develop refined tastes in literature (she was always a bookworm) and the arts. This, too, chimed with the French court's spiralling interest in attracting celebrated painters from across Europe. Francis would offer a good deal of work to Andrea del Sarto and provide cosy lodgings for an ageing Leonardo da Vinci. Francis was no intellectual giant but he saw sense in dipping his toe into the waters of humanistic learning, notably through support of Guillaume Budé, who found rewarding work as the king's librarian. A related, but more disruptive, legacy from the French years was Anne's cautious embrace of the cause of religious reform – this, again, may have been sparked by her relationship with Marguerite of Angoulême. It would be erroneous to position Anne as a fully fledged Lutheran, but she had a deep passion for Biblical translation (Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples' French version was among her most prized possessions). She relished reformist texts like the *Sermon du bon pasteur*, and was well aware of many of the age's challenging theological ideas, such as the Lutheran concept of justification by faith alone. This all began in France and would have momentous consequences back in England. Anne should not be seen as the mastermind behind a Protestant-minded 'party' but she did lend support to the episcopal careers of adventurous thinkers. This would be more than enough ammunition for Anne's enemies to use against her when the time came.



The great French theologian Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples, whose Biblical translations helped to shape Anne's religious beliefs

Henry VIII largely admired what the French had to offer, and was envious of Francis I's style

This all lay in the future, of course. More urgent was the question that must have occupied Anne's thoughts as she contemplated. Would she be seen as a welcome exotic import or, with all her fancy skills and ideas, as being hopelessly out of step with the ways of the English court? She would soon find out. The relationship between Henry VIII and Francis I had reached a point of crisis and there was simply no longer a place for an English maid-in-waiting in the household of a French queen. Anne was home by late 1521 or early 1522.

It is tempting to assume that a clash of cultures was inevitable. If France had embraced the idea of a fun-loving, adventurous – if still highly regulated – court, the household of Catherine of Aragon might appear, at least at first, as rather lacklustre by comparison. The advice of someone like the influential Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives held considerable appeal. "She who rouses allurement in those who behold her does not possess true chastity," Vives wrote. The slightest unseemly gesture was to be frowned upon and there was a direct route between witty chat and sexual encounter.

The power of such ideas in England can easily be overstated, however. Catherine was partial to a nice dress or an energetic dance, and had no problems about showing off her courtiers' beauty in order to impress foreign visitors. During treaty celebrations in 1518 the "lady maskers took each of them a French gentleman to dance with them... [they spoke] good French, which delighted much these gentlemen". A Venetian visitor in 1527 was even more bowled over. The women at court "caused me to think I was contemplating the choirs of angels".

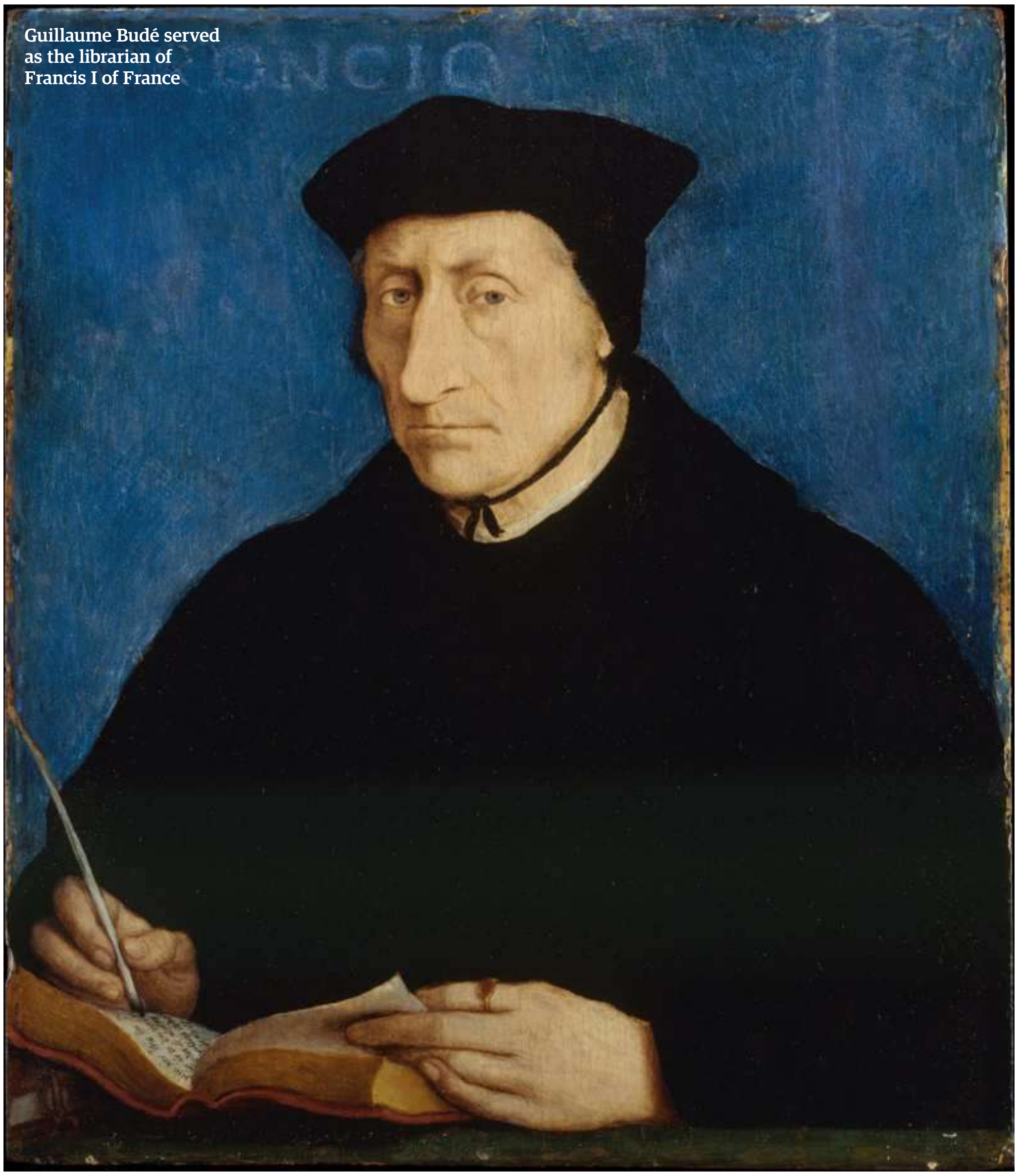
So yes, Catherine and Henry could put on a show when needed and Anne Boleyn's fondness for a little glitz was no great cause for concern. In fact, we should probably not picture her as some ravishing beauty who was about to alienate every woman at the English court. She was pretty enough but, as one contemporary saw things, "not one of the handsomest women in the world". She was of "middling stature, swarthy complexion, thin neck, wide mouth, [and] bosom not much raised," though there was no ignoring the eyes, "which are black and beautiful." Henry noticed Anne very quickly, but it was probably her vibrancy and intellect that captured his attention.

Nor did these qualities necessarily provoke resentment in others. Being a skilled musician or a witty conversationalist were no crimes, after all. The link with France did have the potential to ruffle some feathers, however. Anne's long spell away from home would make her seem rather exotic - lending her, as the historian Eric Ives puts it, a "continental polish". Perhaps some did find the confidence and the talkativeness a little hard to stomach. "For her behaviour, manners, attire and tongue" she was distinctive, precisely because, as one observer put it, "she had been brought up in France". This perhaps caused some discomfort in an England that was still very much on the periphery of European culture.

The French link also threatened to expose a deep-seated Francophobia within Tudor society. Contemporaries often grumbled about the deleterious impact of young men pursuing their studies across the English Channel: they often came home, according to London lawyer Edward Hall, "all French in eating, drinking and apparel" and in "French vices and brags". At the time of Anne's marriage, the visiting French ambassador would be greeted with cries of "French dog" and "whoreson knave", while Lord Leonard Grey got into a good deal of trouble for announcing that if "I had a drop of French blood in my body I would cut myself open to get rid of it." Such prejudices died hard and, even at the end of the Tudor era, courtier Robert Dallington would still be itemising the nine great French moral failings: disobedience, negligence, railing, recklessness, sloth, lack of manners, deceit, forgetfulness and stupidity. Admittedly, the French had splendid buildings and one of the most delicate languages in the world, but, according to Dallington, they also possessed a puerile sense of humour and a terrible habit of shrugging off future problems in order to enjoy the present moment: "like schoolboys who care not, so long as they may play today, though they may be birched tomorrow".

Such bigotry was certainly not insuperable, however, and luckily enough Henry VIII had a soft spot for many aspects of French culture. He hated the place politically and militarily but shipped in French craftsmen and jewellers, was competent in the language, and even had a grudging respect for the fashion sense of his great rival, Francis I.

All that King Henry VIII and most of his court probably saw when Anne Boleyn made her first public appearance after returning home was a young woman, torn between opening-night nerves and the self-confidence that France had granted her. The occasion was a Shrove Tuesday masque with Anne portraying the character of Perseverance. She would certainly require deep reserves of that commodity in the turbulent years to come.


Guillaume Budé served as the librarian of Francis I of France

“HENRY HATED THE PLACE POLITICALLY AND MILITARILY, BUT HE SHIPPED IN FRENCH CRAFTSMEN AND JEWELLERS”

THE WEDDING OF ANNE & HENRY

The controversial royal wedding that changed the course of England's future forever

Written by June Woolerton

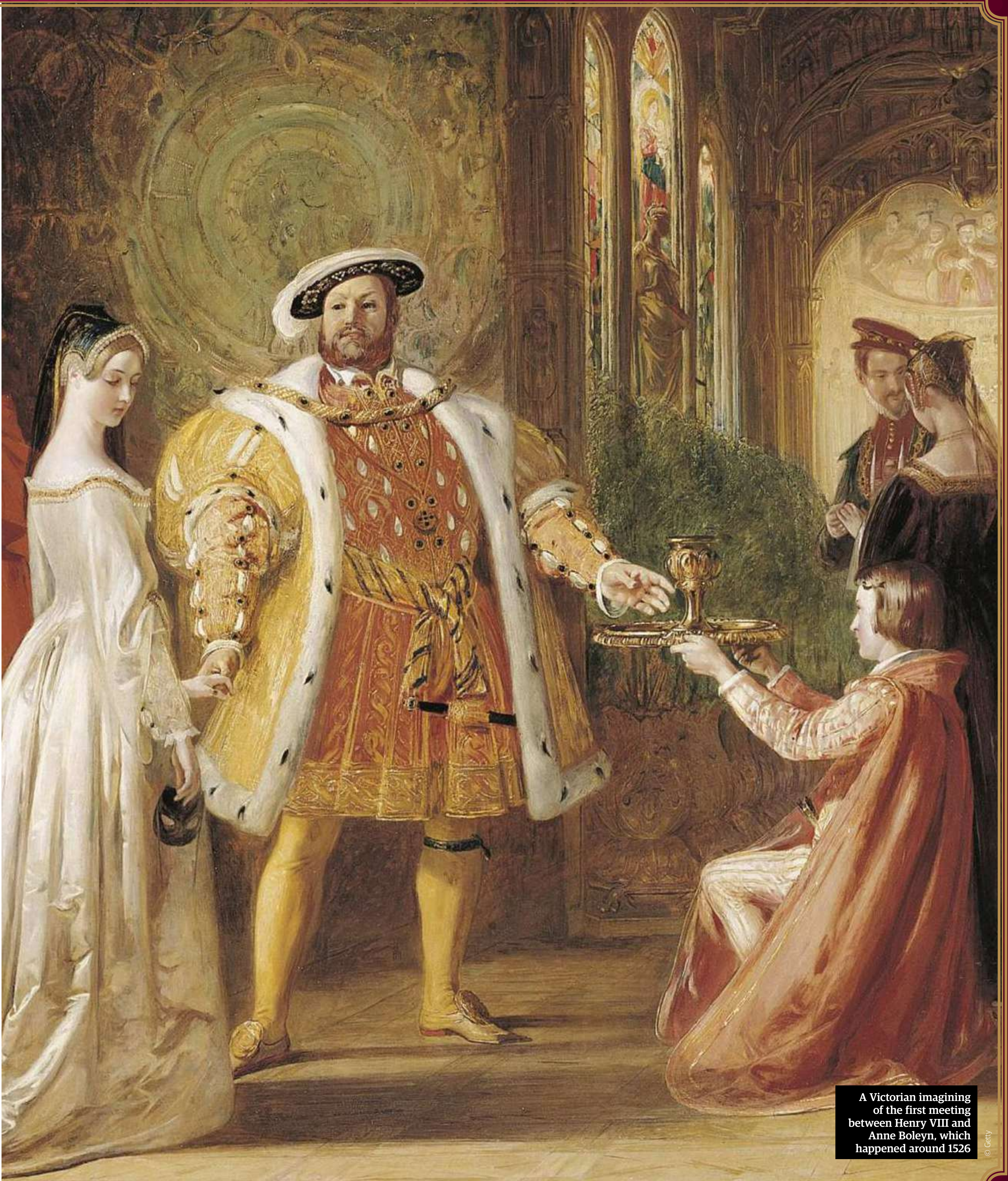
They had caused a religious revolution in their quest to marry, but when Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn finally became husband and wife, they did so in secret. The couple's wedding, on 25 January 1533 in a room above the Holbein Gate at Whitehall Palace, was witnessed by just a handful of people and there were no celebrations afterwards. It may even have been the second secret wedding ceremony Henry and Anne had gone through, for while the pair had decided that nothing could stop their union, there was a very good reason that they kept their wedding to themselves. On the day they made their vows, Henry was still officially married to his first wife, Catherine of Aragon.

The king's first wife had been an inconvenient stumbling block from the moment Henry and Anne decided to marry over five years earlier. Catherine's refusal to agree to an annulment had dismayed then angered Henry, a monarch who was used to getting his own way. Anne had a personality every bit as powerful as that of her future husband but even so, neither could have foreseen the battle they would face to wed when they first fell in love.

Exactly when that was is hard to pin down – Henry and Anne were good at keeping secrets. However, the king's surviving love letters to her suggest the attraction was serious, at least for him, as early as 1526. By then she was a rising star at court, having returned to England after spending her formative years on the continent.

Born at some point between 1501 and 1507, Anne had spent her early years as lady-in-waiting to a series of royal ladies in Europe. A long stint at the French court had introduced her to sophisticated thinking and fashion, which she made her calling card when she returned to England. Her dark hair and eyes, as well as her charm and personality, soon saw men trying to court her.

Her lively wit and expertise at the game of courtly love is believed to have been instrumental in Henry's attraction to her. By the time he fell in love, the king was in his mid 30s and had reigned for over 15 years. He had built a reputation for wise government, military prowess and a love of learning, but he was also known as a romantic. In the early years, he had showered Catherine with affection even though their marriage had been a politically useful alliance. He had also had a string of mistresses, including Anne's sister, Mary. However, when Henry set his sights on Anne, she refused to follow her sister's lead and rebuffed all attempts by the king to make her his lover.



A Victorian imagining of the first meeting between Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, which happened around 1526

© Getty

> “ANNE WAS NOW STAYING IN THE CHAMBERS THAT HAD ONCE BEEN USED BY THE QUEEN”

This only deepened Henry’s passion for her and his surviving letters are filled with desire. In the earliest, written in May 1527, he tells Anne he has “been for above a whole year stricken with the dart of love”, while in a later letter he writes “my heart and I surrender ourselves into your hands”, signing himself “your loyal servant, H.R.” He tells Anne that “wherever I am, I am yours”, while another note is decorated with hearts containing his love’s initials interspersed with his own name.

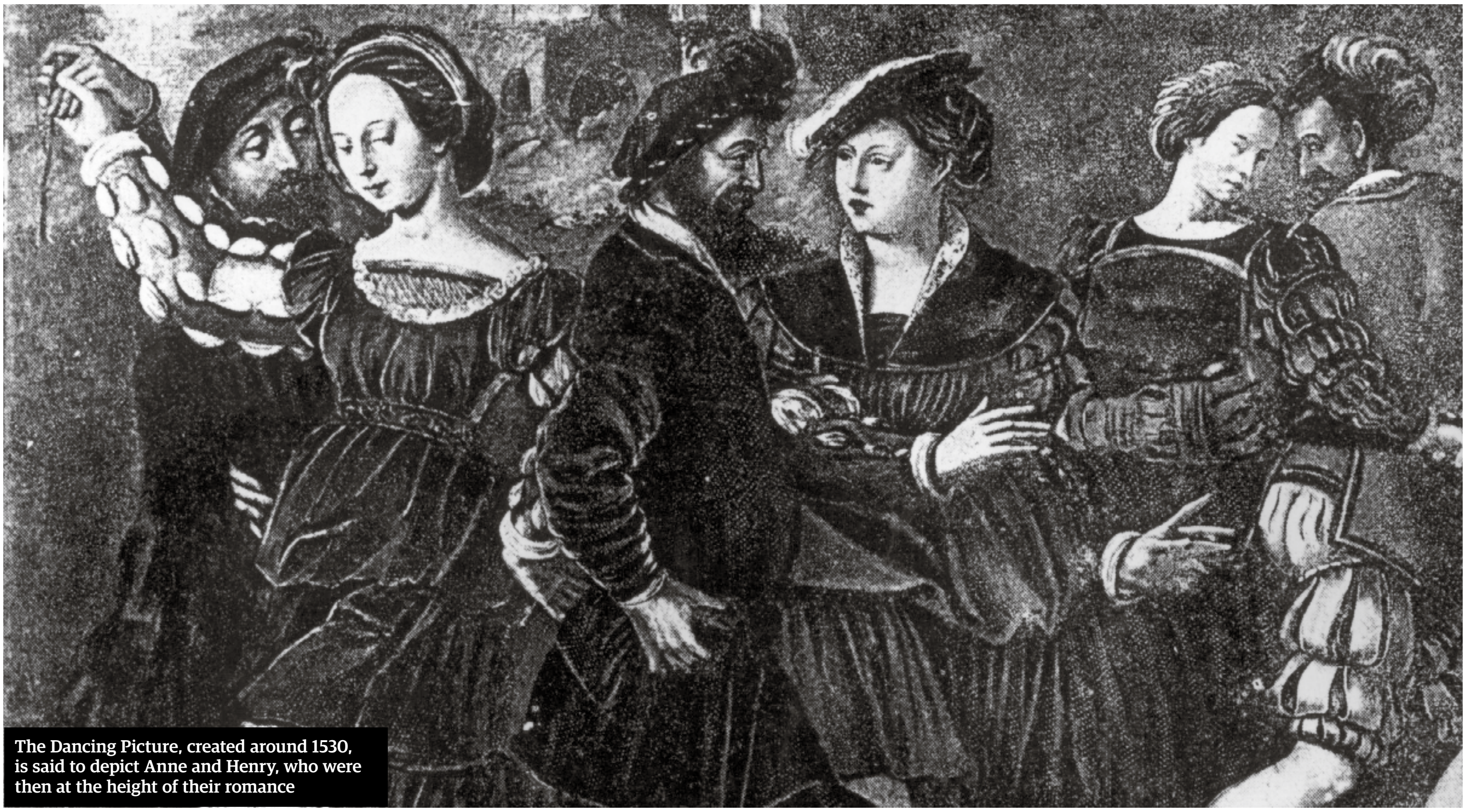
Anne still refused to become his mistress and soon they had agreed to marry. But while the couple’s relationship was filled with passion, it was also a matter of politics. By the time Anne won his heart, Henry had already given serious thought to ending his marriage to Catherine. The couple had just one surviving child, a daughter named Mary, and the queen was approaching 40 and unlikely to have more babies. Henry began to ask whether his union was really valid as Catherine had previously been married to his older brother, Arthur. The queen maintained that relationship had never been consummated but Henry, with his deep knowledge of the Bible, became fixated on the Old Testament Book of Leviticus which said if a man married his brother’s wife, they would be childless.

In 1527, Henry sought a papal annulment to his marriage but soon afterwards the pope, Clement VII, became a prisoner of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, who just happened to be Catherine’s nephew. Henry’s chief minister, Cardinal Wolsey, began looking for other solutions and established a special court to examine the validity of the marriage with both king and queen commanded to appear before it. Catherine made a dramatic plea to her husband to put aside attempts to end their marriage, winning a lot of sympathy in the process. Unfortunately for Henry, a papal legate sent from Rome especially for the hearing held proceedings up and the annulment failed to materialise.

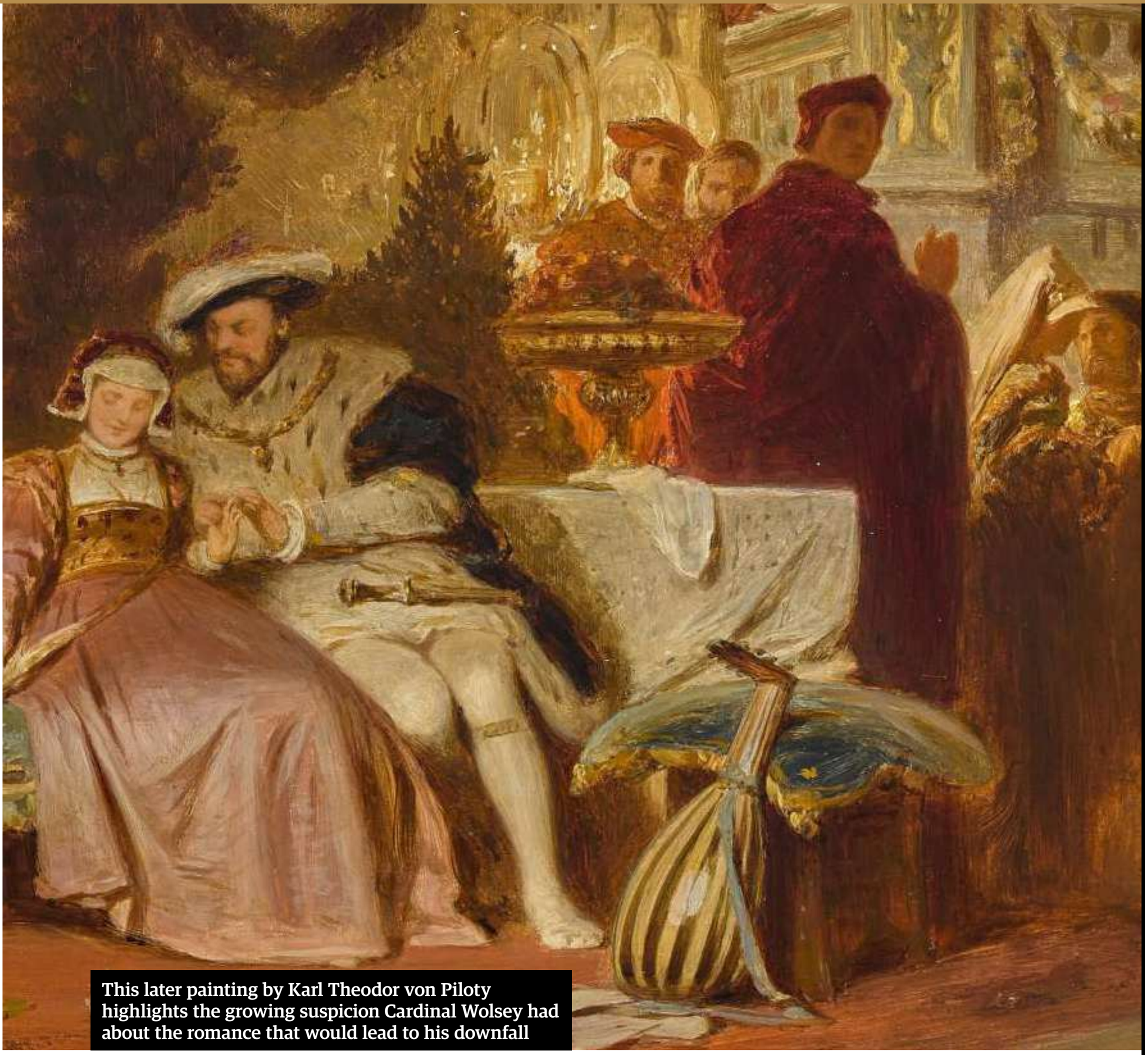
‘The King’s Great Matter’, as Henry’s attempts to scratch his first marriage from the history books was known, continued to rumble on while Anne became an increasingly visible and important part of his life. By 1531, Henry had broken contact with Catherine, who was conspicuously absent from that year’s Christmas celebrations. Eustace Chapuys, Charles V’s ambassador to England, noted soon afterwards that Anne was now staying in the chambers that had once been used by the queen. On 1 September 1532, Henry made Anne marquess of Pembroke, the first time a woman had been elevated to the peerage in her own right. In October, she accompanied Henry to Calais where the king of France, Francis I, talked and danced with her. It was a public recognition of her status as Henry’s partner and now the couple made marriage their priority.

Some contemporaries, including the chronicler Edward Hall, believed that Henry and Anne were married or made some kind of formal commitment to each other on their return from Calais in November 1532. The couple began to sleep together around this time and Henry’s determination to have a male heir meant that any pregnancy needed to result in a legitimate birth. The marriage Henry and Anne underwent on 25 January 1533 was out of necessity as well as desire when it became clear that Anne was pregnant.

The ceremony itself was very simple. Both promised “have and to hold, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer”, while Tudor brides traditionally vowed to “be bonny and buxom in bed and board”. While very few details of the ceremony survive, we do know that the bare minimum number of witnesses were invited with the royal chaplain, Rowland Lee, the most likely priest to officiate. However, there was no legal requirement to record the wedding in a register, so Henry and Anne could cover their tracks while they worked out what to do about Catherine.



The Dancing Picture, created around 1530, is said to depict Anne and Henry, who were then at the height of their romance



This later painting by Karl Theodor von Piloty highlights the growing suspicion Cardinal Wolsey had about the romance that would lead to his downfall

Rumours soon began to fly about a possible marriage and while the king and his bride said nothing, their actions began to betray the truth. At a royal banquet for foreign ambassadors, Anne took the seat usually occupied by the queen. Meanwhile, at Easter, she attended Mass wearing cloth of gold that could only be worn by royalty under laws devised by the king's own father. But the couple couldn't keep their secret forever.

Henry had since put aside any plans to get the pope to help him end his marriage and some saw Anne as instrumental in that. She had shown an interest in the religious reform sweeping through Europe and Henry, partly through his desperation for an annulment, began to examine them, too. It was later claimed that Anne had given her husband a copy of William Tyndale's *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, a text that suggested a king was head of his country's church. Whether that is true or not, by 1533 Henry was convinced that he didn't need the authority of the pope to resolve his marital problems.

His new archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, agreed and on 10 May 1533 he set up a new court that took less than a fortnight to decide that Henry and Catherine's wedding was invalid. This meant that the king's marriage to Anne was his only legal union. The ultimate confirmation from Henry himself came at the end of May as he wrote to the mayor of London, Sir Stephen Peacock, telling him "his pleasure was to… celebrate the coronation of his most dear and well beloved wife, Queen Anne".

Anne didn't need a public royal wedding – the spectacular celebrations planned for her coronation would instead be the confirmation of her new status as wife of the king. On 29 May 1533, she arrived at the Tower of London in a flotilla of 50 barges headed by a representation of a fire-breathing dragon. On 31 May, Queen Anne, dressed in white with a jewelled circlet in her hair, was carried through the crimson-draped streets of London on a litter covered by a canopy of cloth of gold. She was entertained by pageants laid on in her honour while fountains in the street ran with wine. On the following day, 1 June, she walked into Westminster Abbey wearing royal purple where Cranmer placed St Edward's Crown, until then only used for the coronation of the monarch, firmly on her head.

Anne's place as queen was now finally secure after years of waiting. And it had been sealed initially in a wedding in a dark room on a frosty morning, the unceremonious pinnacle of a royal romance that had changed the monarchy, the Church and the country forever.

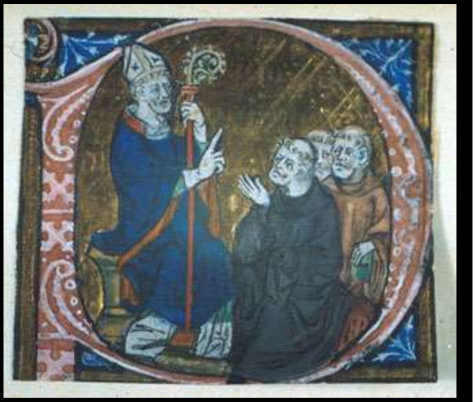
THE BRIDE OF SAINT ERKENWALD'S DAY

Anne and Henry may actually have married at the end of 1532 and on a highly significant date

For centuries it has been speculated that Anne first wed Henry soon after their return from Calais where King Francis I of France had treated her as Henry's partner. However, the chronicler Edward Hall believed that the couple had actually exchanged vows at the end of 1532 with their wedding taking place on 14 November, the Feast of Saint Erkenwald.

Protestant historians were keen to follow his theory as it guaranteed that their daughter, Elizabeth I, had been conceived within wedlock. She was born on 7 September 1533, less than nine months after Henry and Anne's other secret ceremony on 25 January 1533, and a November wedding would remove any shadow of doubt about her right to the throne.

But 14 November was a significant for another reason – on that date in 1501, Catherine of Aragon had married Henry's older brother, Arthur, in a ceremony at Old Saint Paul's Cathedral in London. It was this union that had convinced Henry that his own marriage to the Spanish princess was invalid so any possible wedding on the anniversary would have carried special meaning for him. However, with no written records, it is impossible to know whether Anne, like Catherine before her, had been a bride on Saint Erkenwald's Day.



Saint Erkenwald was a popular Medieval saint, and Henry and Anne were believed by some to have actually married on his feast day in 1532

© Wiki; Getty; Thinkstock

THE TRIAL OF ANNE BOLEYN

In May 1536 Henry VIII's second wife and queen was executed by a French swordsman, but what led to her brutal end?

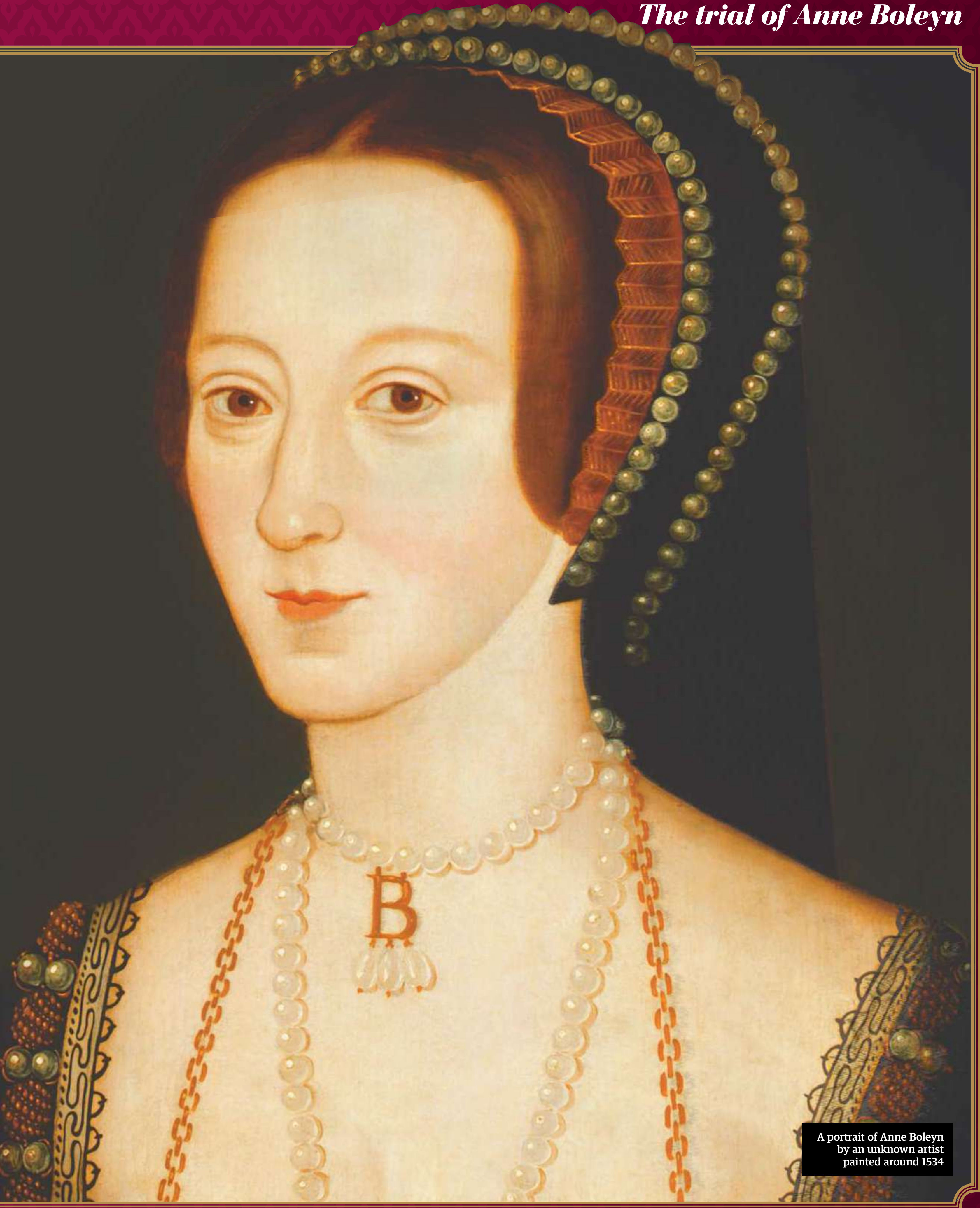
Written by Claire Ridgway

In 19 May 1536, Anne Boleyn became the first queen in English history to be publicly executed. In June 1533, Anne had stayed in the royal apartments of the Tower of London getting ready for her coronation at Westminster Abbey. Just three years later, she stayed in these same apartments in preparation for her execution as a traitor.

Anne had been coronated with St Edward's crown, one that was usually reserved for monarchs. It was a powerful statement that she was Henry VIII's true queen and the child she was carrying was his legitimate heir. Fast forward to 1536 and while she was imprisoned in the Tower, her husband spent his time gallivanting with ladies. Henry thought so little of Anne that he didn't even provide a coffin: an old chest had to be fetched from the Tower armoury. How could things change so dramatically in only three years?

1536 had started well for Henry and Anne. Anne was pregnant and her nemesis, Catherine of Aragon, had died on 7 January. Henry VIII now had no cause for a quarrel with Emperor Charles V, Catherine's nephew, so there were new foreign policy opportunities, and there was no doubt that Anne was the only Queen of England. But, on 24 January, Henry VIII suffered a serious jousting accident. This brush with death was a reminder of just how important it was for England to have a Prince of Wales. Unfortunately, Anne miscarried 'a male child' four days later. It must have been a huge blow as Anne had already suffered at least one other miscarriage. Was history repeating itself? Was Anne just another Catherine? Henry VIII appears to have thought so, for he said, "I see that God will not give me male children." Anne, on the other hand, blamed the miscarriage on the shock she suffered at the news of Henry's accident and her discovery that he was involved with Jane Seymour. At a time when grief should have brought the royal couple together, blame may well have torn them apart.

While Henry was courting Jane, Anne was making an enemy. She had argued with Thomas Cromwell regarding the dissolution of the monasteries. Cromwell, as Henry's faithful servant, was directing the proceeds to the royal coffers, but she felt that the money would be better spent on education and charitable causes. On Passion Sunday, her almoner preached on the story of Queen Esther, describing how King Ahasuerus had been deceived by his chief adviser Haman into ordering the killing of the Jews after promising that this would bring him riches. Esther changed her husband's mind, saving the Jews. The suggestion was that Anne was Esther, saving the people and the king from Cromwell's evil intentions.



A portrait of Anne Boleyn by an unknown artist painted around 1534

Hever Castle in Kent was the childhood home of Anne Boleyn

Three weeks later, on 24 April 1536, Sir Thomas Audley, Henry's Lord Chancellor, set up commissions of oyer and terminer (a commission issued to judges) for the counties of Middlesex and Kent. These were used to prosecute serious criminal offences. A grand jury would investigate the alleged crime and, if there was sufficient evidence, approve a bill of indictment. The commission would then try the defendant. These orders were rare, and no details were given on the crimes, but on 30 April 1536, court musician Mark Smeaton was taken to Thomas Cromwell's house in Stepney for interrogation.

On 1 May, the king and queen attended the May Day joust. The queen's brother, George Boleyn, Lord Rochford, led the challengers and Sir Henry Norris, the king's groom of the stool, led the defenders. Everything appeared normal; the king appeared merry and, in an act of chivalry, stepped in and offered Norris his horse when his refused to run.

Suddenly, the king rose and left, taking Norris with him. George Constantine, Norris's servant, recorded that the king interrogated Norris on the way to Westminster, promising him a pardon if he would confess to sleeping with the queen. A shocked Norris refused to confess, but his pleas of innocence fell on deaf ears. He was committed to the Tower of London the next morning.

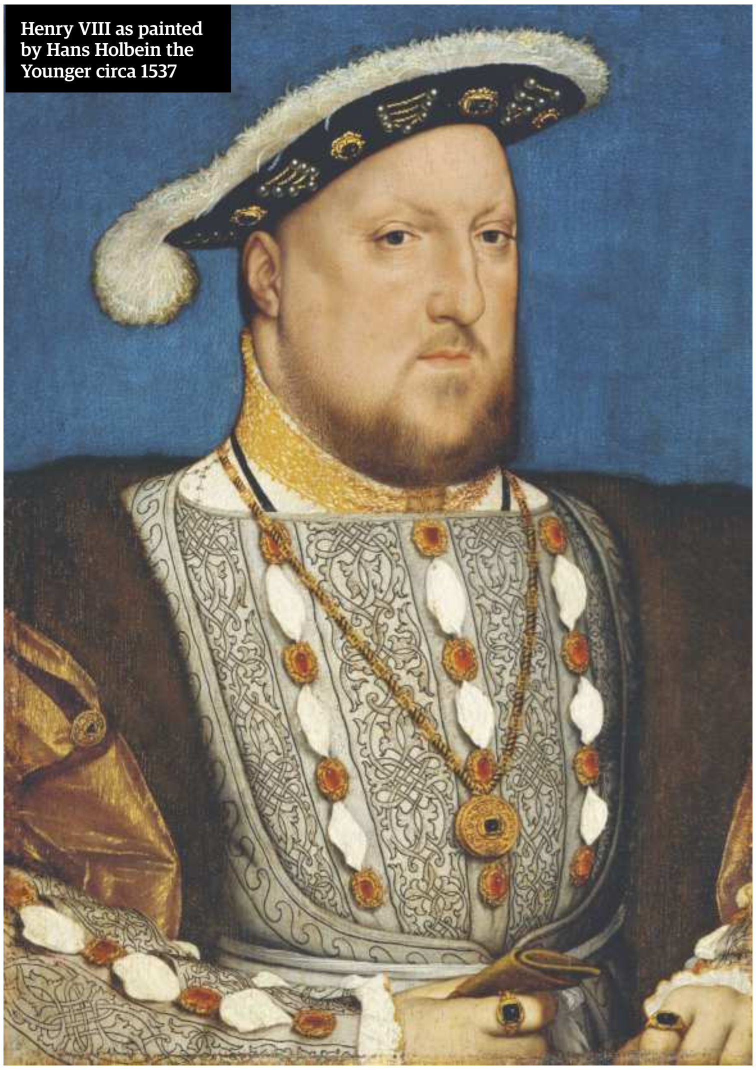
The king's departure may have been caused by news that Mark Smeaton had confessed to sleeping with Anne on three separate occasions. Was his confession coerced? It's impossible to say. *The Spanish Chronicle*, never the most accurate source, tells of Smeaton being tortured with a rope being tightened gradually around his head, and Constantine recorded that there were rumours that he had been racked. Perhaps Smeaton, like Norris, was offered a deal if he confessed. Whatever happened, Smeaton was taken to the Tower and kept in chains.

On 2 May, Queen Anne Boleyn was watching a game of tennis at Greenwich Palace. A messenger interrupted her, informing her that she was to present herself in the council chamber. There, members of the king's council, headed by her uncle, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, informed her that she stood accused of committing adultery with Mark Smeaton, Sir Henry Norris and an unnamed man. She was told that Norris and Smeaton had confessed. Anne later spoke of how she was "cruelly handled" by the councillors and that her uncle stood there, shaking his head and 'tutting' at her.

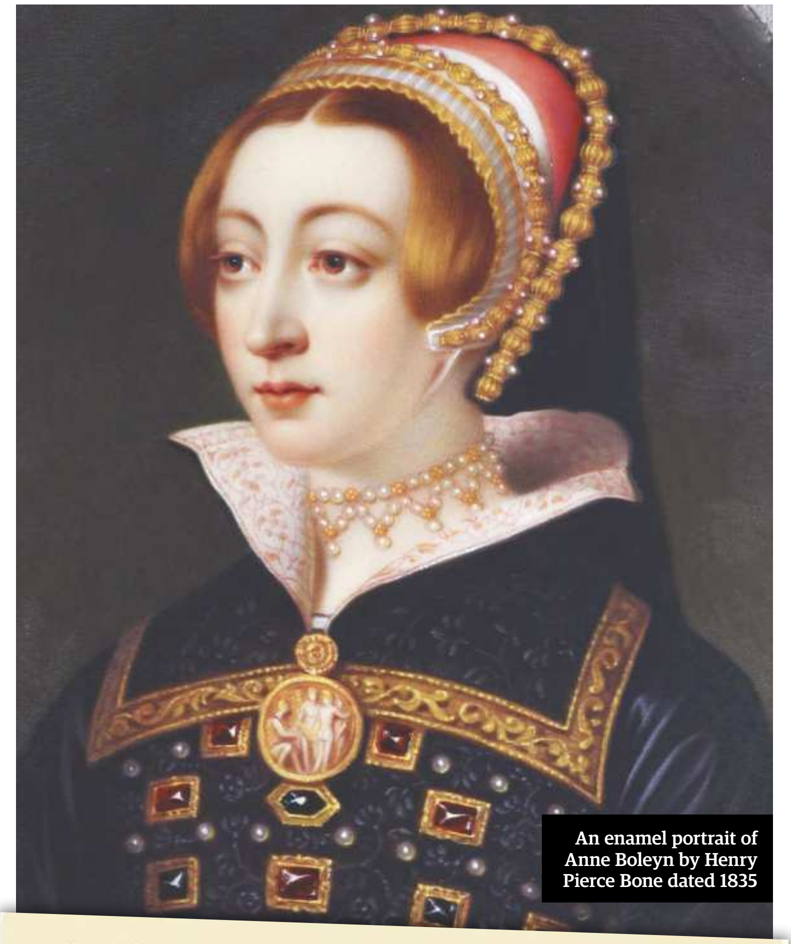
While Anne denied everything, her arrest was ordered, and she was escorted to her apartments. By 2pm, the tide of the Thames had turned, allowing Anne to be taken by barge to the Tower. As she entered the Tower, she fell to her knees "beseeching God to help her as she was not guilty of her accusements" and begging the lords who accompanied her to ask the king to be good to her. She was taken to the royal apartments, which would serve as her prison, and appointed ladies whose job was to report to Sir William Kingston, Constable of the Tower, on everything said.

Anne was unaware that her brother had been arrested at Whitehall that afternoon and was already imprisoned in the Tower. It was initially believed that he had been arrested as an accessory to the charges brought against his sister. Eustace Chapuys, the imperial ambassador, reported that, "Her brother is imprisoned for not giving information of her crime," something that would have constituted misprision of treason.

On 4 May, Sir Francis Weston and William Brereton were arrested and imprisoned in the Tower. Weston was young, popular, sporty and



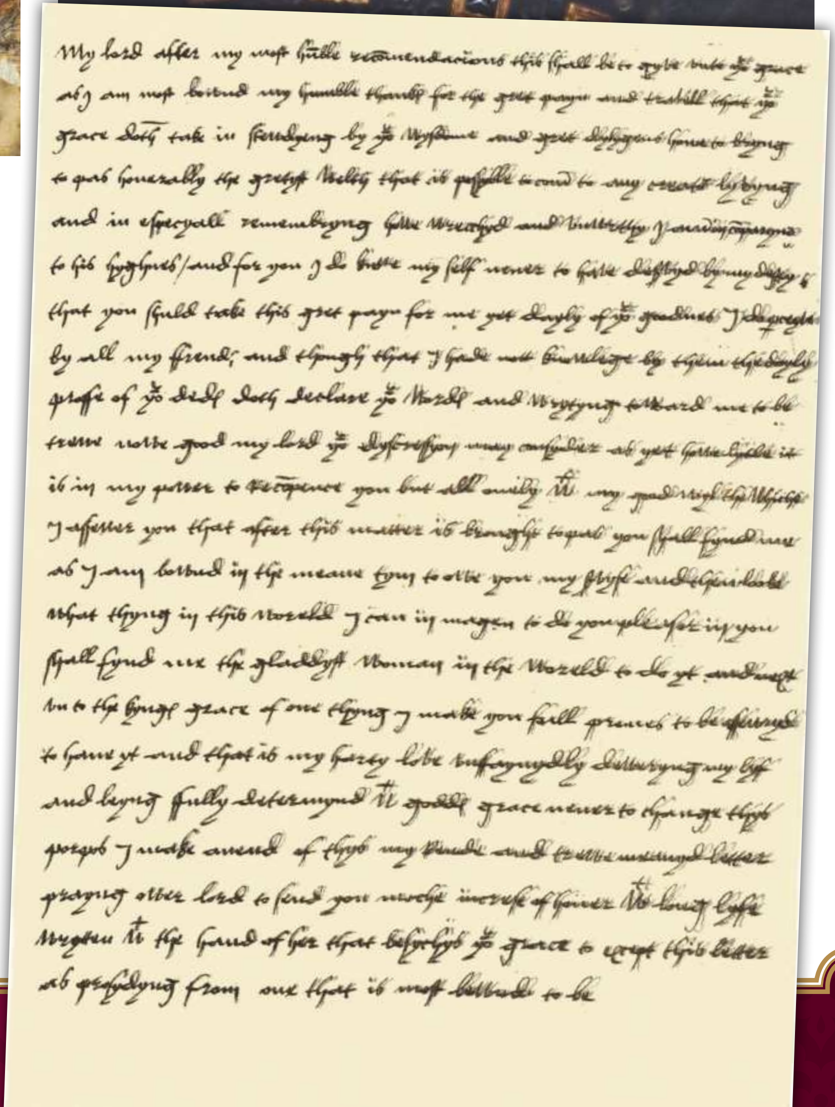
Henry VIII as painted by Hans Holbein the Younger circa 1537



An enamel portrait of Anne Boleyn by Henry Pierce Bone dated 1835

a man described as "daintily nourished under the king's wing". He was a royal favourite, and it appears his arrest was down to something Anne said. In trying to understand why she had been arrested, she mentioned that she feared what Weston had to say, recalling how she had rebuked him for flirting with one of her ladies. He'd retorted that he loved someone better than both his wife and the lady in question: Anne. It was a cheeky retort, an innocent flirtation, but it would lead to his death. The wealthy and influential William Brereton was also a royal favourite, having accompanied Henry and Anne on several hunting trips and having received royal grants and offices. He had a colourful reputation, using his influence in North Wales and Cheshire for personal gain and, allegedly, to persecute the innocent. Why he was arrested is not clear, but he had got on Thomas Cromwell's wrong side by opposing his plans for administrative reform in Wales.

By 5 May, the final arrests had been made. Thomas Wyatt the Elder, the poet who had once been in love with Anne Boleyn, had been taken to the Tower, as had Sir Richard Page, a gentleman of the



A letter from Anne to Cardinal Wolsey thanking him for his promoting of her marriage to Henry VIII

> “It was an innocent flirtation, but it would lead to his death”

privy chamber and a former favourite of Thomas Cromwell. Sir Francis Bryan, a relative of both Anne Boleyn and Jane Seymour, was ordered to London for interrogation. However, he either managed to talk his way out of trouble or the interrogation was a ruse – after all, he was allied with the Seymours and had distanced himself from the Boleyns.

On 10 May, the Grand Jury of Middlesex announced that there was sufficient evidence to suggest that the Queen, Lord Rochford, Sir Henry Norris, Sir Francis Weston, William Brereton and Mark Smeaton were guilty of the charges against them and they should be indicted and sent to trial. The following day, the Grand Jury of Kent made the same ruling. No mention was made of Sir Thomas Wyatt or Sir Richard Page.

The indictments covered a period between early October 1533, just a month after Anne had given birth to Elizabeth, and January 1536. According to the charges, Anne Boleyn “seduced by evil and not having God before her eyes, and following daily her frail and carnal appetites [...] falsely and traitorously procure by base conversations and kisses, touchings, gifts and other infamous incitations, divers of the king’s daily and familiar servants to be her adulterers and concubines, so that several of the king’s servants yielded to her vile provocations”. Using “kisses, touches and otherwise”, she seduced the men “to have illicit intercourse with her”, and rewarded them with presents. She also “incited her own natural brother, George Boleyn, knight, Lord Rochford, to violate her, alluring him with her tongue in the said George’s mouth, and the said George’s tongue in hers, and also with kisses, presents and jewels, against the commands of the Almighty God, and all laws human and divine, whereby he, despising the commands of God, and all other human laws [...] violated and carnally knew the said queen, his own sister”.

The queen and the men had also “compassed and imagined the king’s death” and Anne had “frequently promised to marry some one of the traitors whenever the king should depart this life, affirming she would never love the king in her heart.” These crimes had caused “certain harms and perils” to befall the king’s “royal body, to the

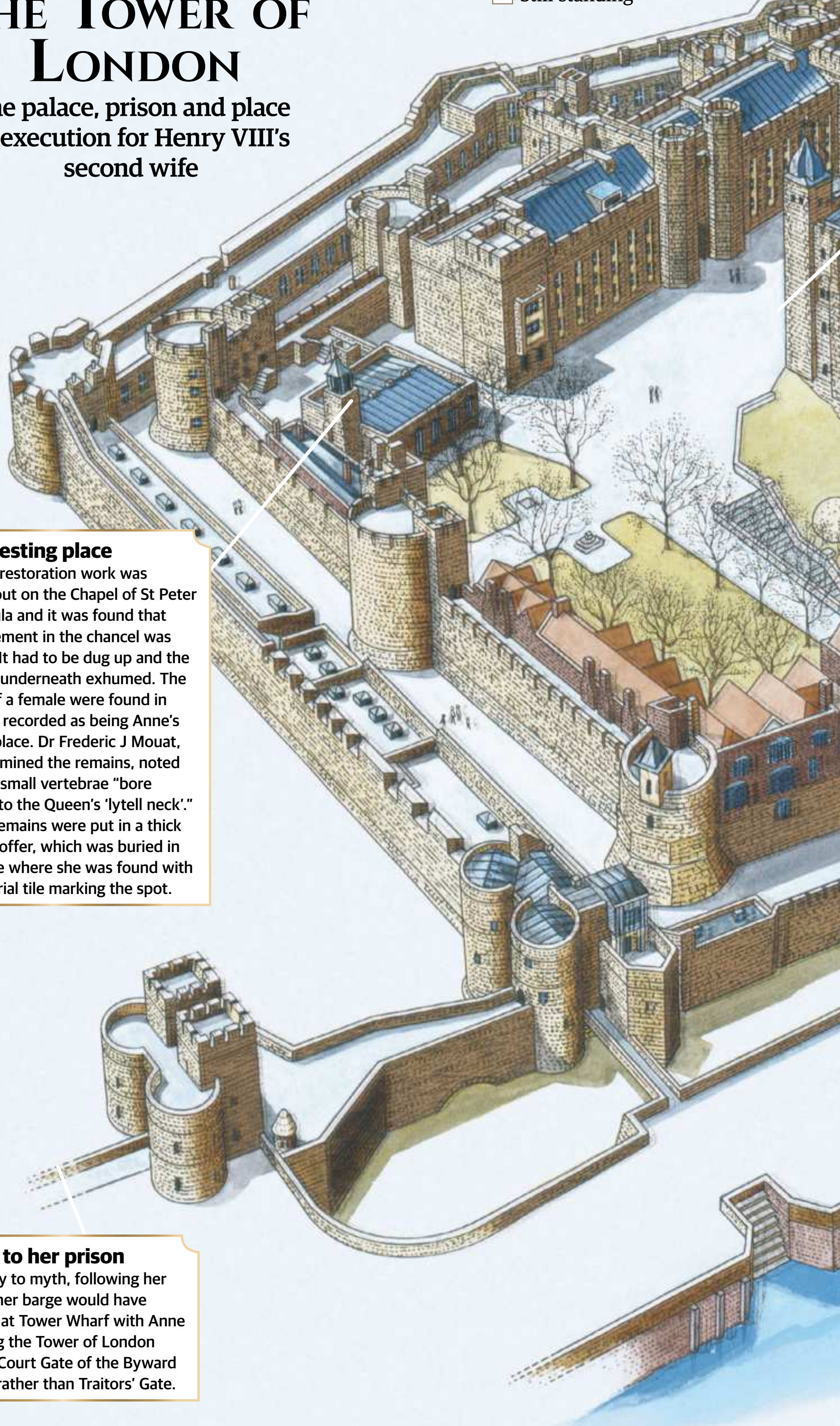
Anne Boleyn in the Tower of London

The palace, prison and place of execution for Henry VIII’s second wife

KEY

▨ No longer exists

☐ Still standing

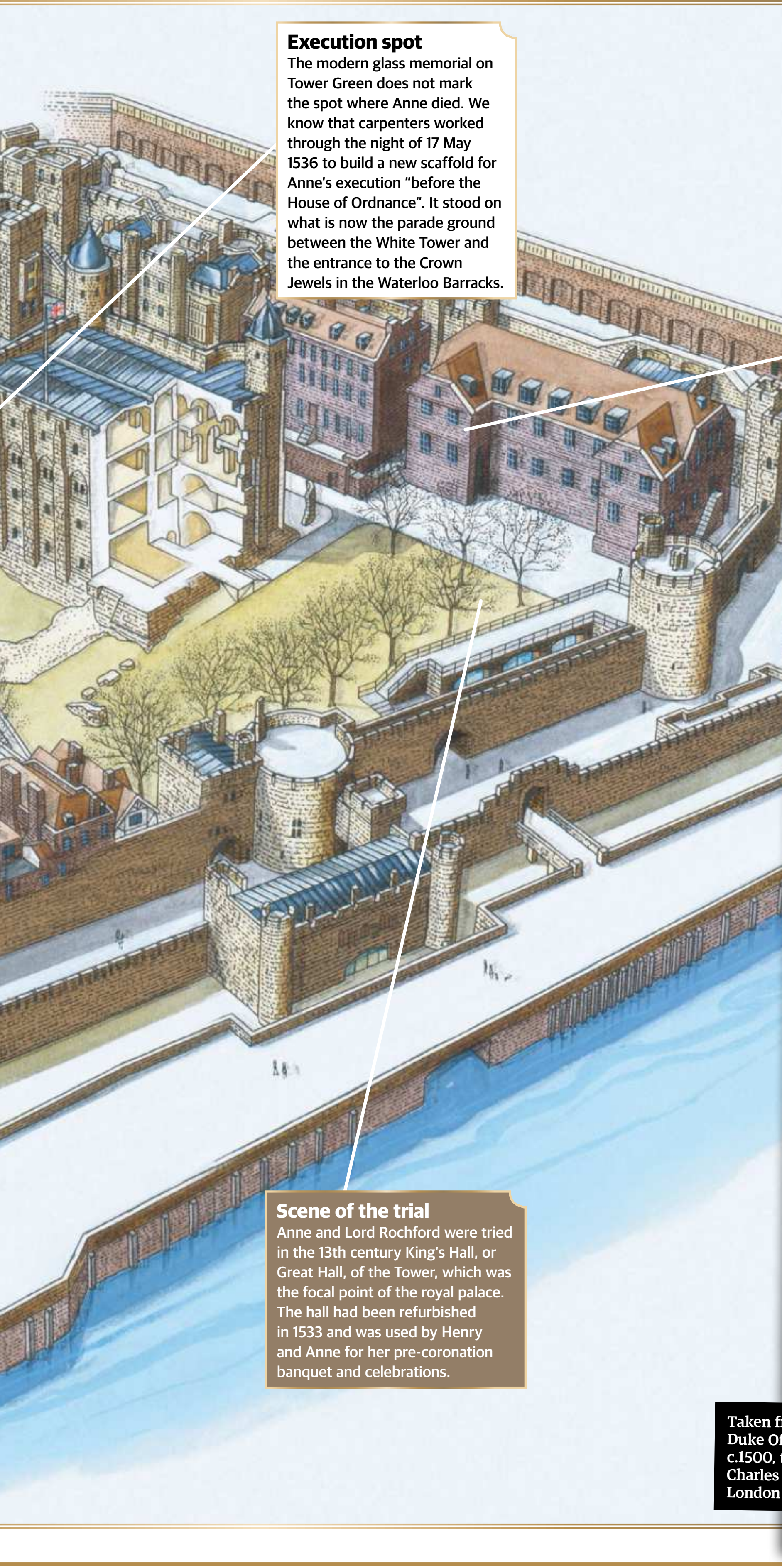


Final resting place

In 1876, restoration work was carried out on the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula and it was found that the pavement in the chancel was sinking. It had to be dug up and the remains underneath exhumed. The bones of a female were found in the spot recorded as being Anne’s resting place. Dr Frederic J Mouat, who examined the remains, noted that the small vertebrae “bore witness to the Queen’s ‘lytell neck’.” Anne’s remains were put in a thick leaden coffer, which was buried in the place where she was found with a memorial tile marking the spot.

Entry to her prison

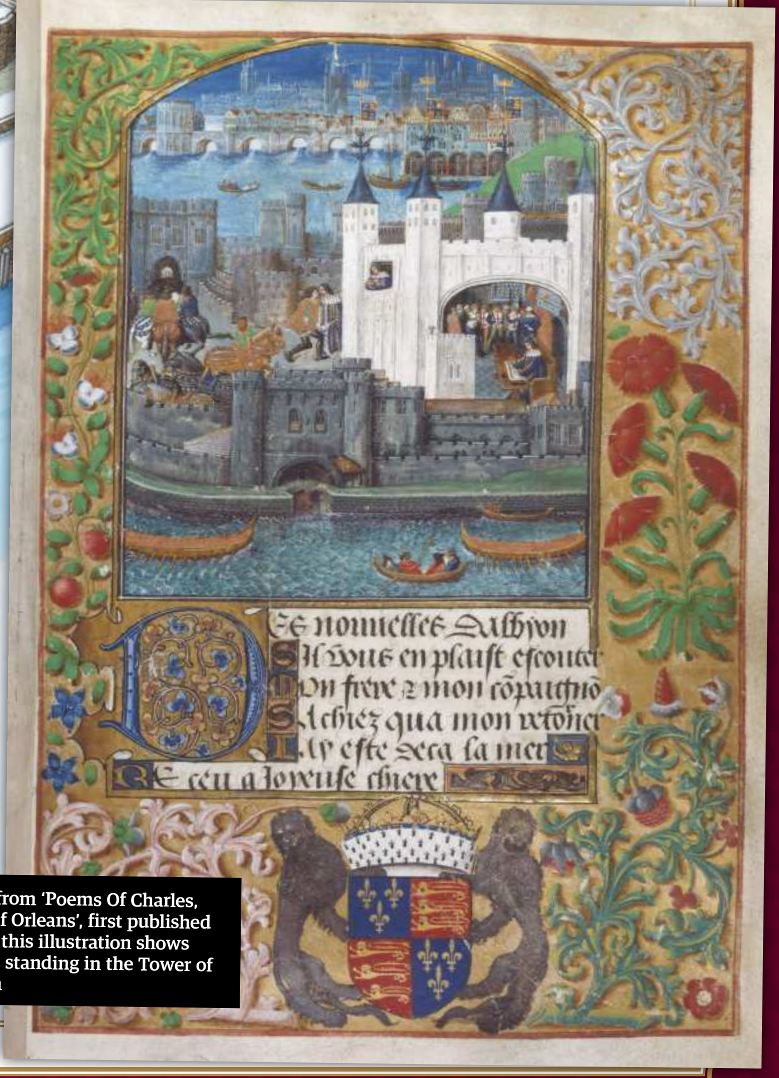
Contrary to myth, following her arrest, her barge would have docked at Tower Wharf with Anne entering the Tower of London via the Court Gate of the Byward Tower, rather than Traitors’ Gate.



Execution spot
The modern glass memorial on Tower Green does not mark the spot where Anne died. We know that carpenters worked through the night of 17 May 1536 to build a new scaffold for Anne's execution "before the House of Ordnance". It stood on what is now the parade ground between the White Tower and the entrance to the Crown Jewels in the Waterloo Barracks.

Royal lodgings
These were not in the Queen's House, the part-timbered building which overlooks Tower Green today – this was not constructed until 1540. Anne was imprisoned in the lavish, Renaissance-style queen's lodgings of the Tower's royal palace which had been built for her use before her coronation in 1533. Unfortunately, these lodgings were demolished in the 18th century. They stood on what is now the south lawn behind the White Tower, between the Lanthorn Tower and the Wardrobe Tower.

Scene of the trial
Anne and Lord Rochford were tried in the 13th century King's Hall, or Great Hall, of the Tower, which was the focal point of the royal palace. The hall had been refurbished in 1533 and was used by Henry and Anne for her pre-coronation banquet and celebrations.


Des nouvelles dAlbyon
Sil vous en plaist escouter
Mon frere ⁊ mon cōpaignon
Sachiez qua mon retourner
Ay este deca la mer
Receu a joyeuse chiere

Taken from 'Poems Of Charles, Duke Of Orleans', first published c.1500, this illustration shows Charles standing in the Tower of London

THE BADGE OF A FALLEN QUEEN

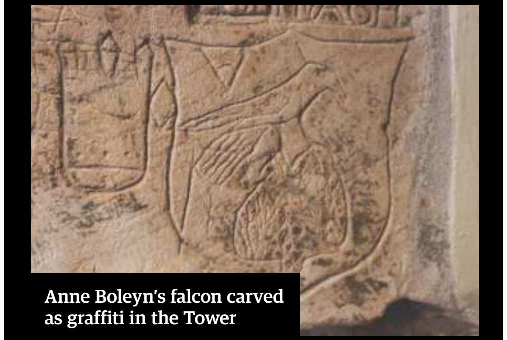
A crude stone carving alludes to Anne Boleyn's fall

Anne Boleyn's royal badge was introduced in a tableau at Anne's coronation procession in 1533. The tableau consisted of a castle with a green, and a tree stump out of which red and white roses spilled. A white falcon descended from heaven and landed on the stump, where it was crowned with an imperial crown by an angel wearing armour.

The falcon was a device used by the Butlers of Ireland, Anne's paternal grandmother's family, and in heraldry, it was used as a symbol of majesty and power. Nicholas Udall, the poet who wrote the verses spoken at the tableau, wrote of this falcon being "of body small, of power regal, […] of courage hault", words that could be used to describe the new queen, and of it having flown for a long time to come to this stump where she could build her nest.

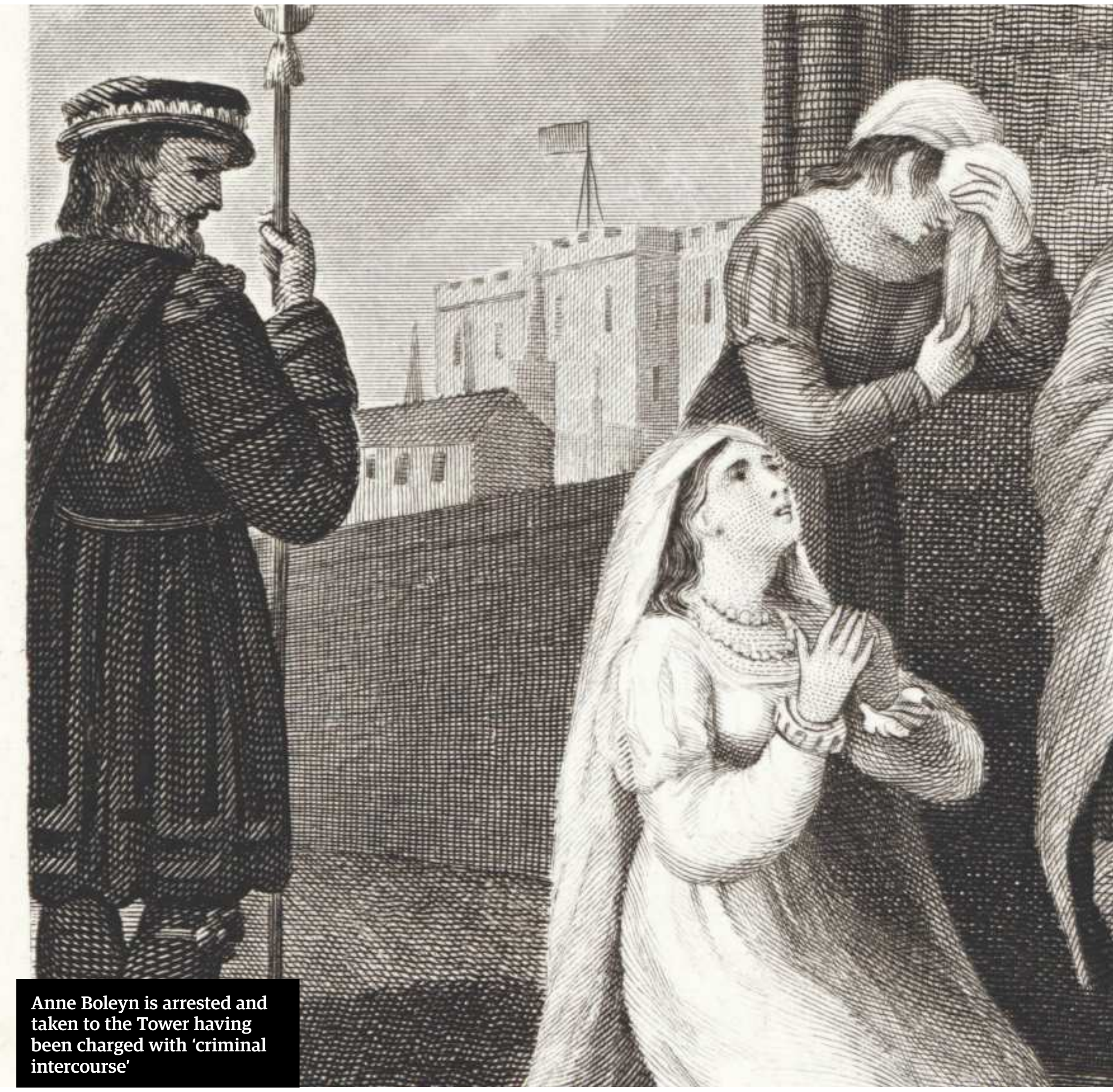
Of course, Anne had waited six years for her coronation. The tree stump was an old royal badge so its use in combination with the red and white roses spoke of Anne's fertility and how she'd provide the barren House of Tudor with a Prince of Wales. The sceptre alluded to Anne's status as Queen and also her God-given authority. Udall wrote of the "diadem imperial" with which the falcon was crowned, describing how Anne's honour had "cometh from God, and not of man."

A carving of Anne's badge can be found in the Beauchamp Tower of the Tower of London, a place used to house important prisoners in the 16th and 17th centuries. There, on walls covered by Tudor graffiti, is a crude carving of Anne's falcon. It is a poignant carving because in this depiction of her badge, the bird is missing its royal sceptre and imperial crown. It is no royal bird. The carver is unknown, but it's likely that it was carved by one of the men imprisoned in 1536, or a Boleyn supporter.



Anne Boleyn's falcon carved as graffiti in the Tower

ENTRY TO THE TRAITORS GATE



Anne Boleyn is arrested and taken to the Tower having been charged with 'criminal intercourse'

The Tower of London where Anne was imprisoned in the lead up to her death

scandal, danger, detriment and derogation of the issue and heirs of the said king and queen." This was treason.

The indictments listed the dates of the alleged offences, the names of the offenders and the location. By comparing these with contemporary records of where the royal court was during this period, the late historian Eric Ives was able to conclude that three-quarters of the alleged offences can be disproved because the defendants could not have been together. For example, on 6 and 12 October 1533, when Anne was alleged to have been with Norris at Westminster, she was confined to her chambers at Greenwich Palace following childbirth. And in December 1533, when Anne was said to be with Brereton at Hampton Court, the court was at Greenwich. However, the allegations also included the words "and on divers other days and places" and "on several days before and after" meaning that even if the dates were challenged, the indictment was still valid. It also suggested that the defendants had committed more crimes than those listed.

In reality, even if Anne and her lovers could have escaped from court for illicit love-making, a queen consort would not have been able to leave without at least one of her ladies. A queen didn't even sleep alone; a lady would sleep on a pallet in her chamber and not one of Anne's ladies was arrested for helping to hide her crimes. In contrast, in 1541, Catherine Howard met with Thomas Culpeper with the help of her lady-in-waiting, Lady Rochford; both women were executed for treason. It is not plausible that Anne could have had over 20 illicit assignations over a 27-month period without help.

In the modern legal system, defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty and the onus is on the prosecution to prove guilt, but in the 16th century the onus was on the accused to prove their innocence. As you can imagine, it is hard to prove a negative. To compound this, a Tudor defendant was often unaware of the evidence that would be used against them, and sometimes even of the charges against them.

Norris, Weston, Brereton and Smeaton were tried at Westminster Hall on 12 May. Many of the commissioners who sat in judgement can be described as hostile, with many of them owing the king or Cromwell a favour or having some reason to want to be rid of one of the defendants. But there was one juror who wouldn't benefit from them being found guilty: Thomas Boleyn. He must have known that if a guilty verdict was ruled then this would prejudice his son and daughter's forthcoming trials.

Mark Smeaton "pleaded guilty of violation and carnal knowledge of the queen, and put himself in the king's mercy", while the others pleaded not guilty. The jury was unanimous in finding all four men guilty of treason, sentencing them to be hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn. Chapuys recorded that Norris, Brereton and Weston were "condemned upon presumption and certain indications, without valid proof or confession."

On 13 May, Anne Boleyn's royal household was broken up, and her staff discharged. The following day, Jane Seymour was moved from outside of London, where she had been sent to prevent gossip, to Chelsea, within a mile of the king's lodgings.

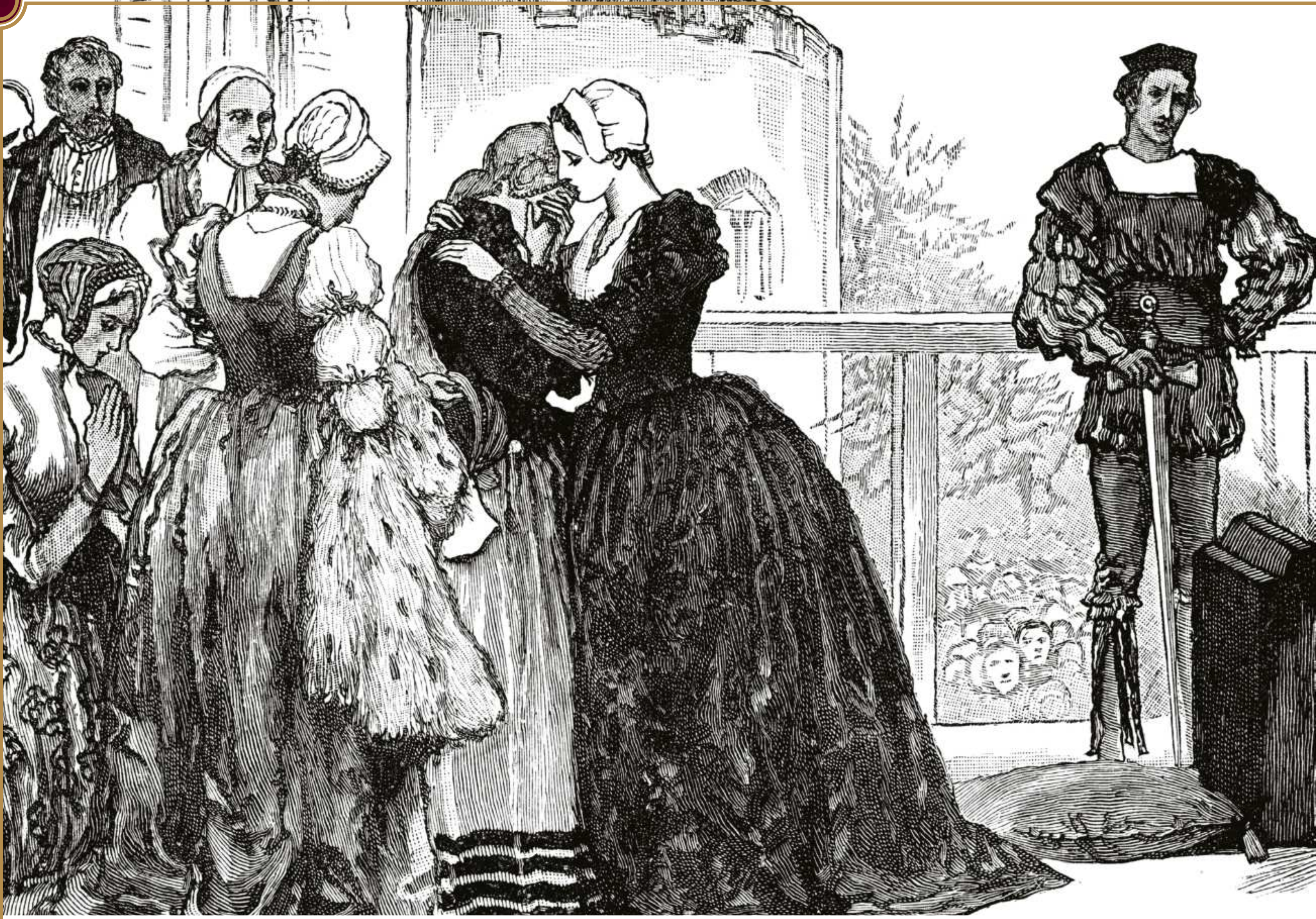
On 15 May, Lord Rochford and the queen were tried separately in the King's Hall at the Tower of London. As members of the aristocracy, they were given the privilege of being tried by their peers, and although the jury was presided over by their uncle, the Duke of Norfolk, as Lord High Steward, they had no hope of being acquitted. Once more, the jury was a hostile one, consisting of many Boleyn enemies. Each jury member would have known what was expected of him: a guilty verdict.

A great platform had been erected in the hall so that the 2,000 spectators could see the proceedings. Anne Boleyn looked every inch a queen as she entered the hall "with the bearing of one coming to great honour". After the charges had been read out, she pleaded not guilty. No witnesses were called, and it is not clear what evidence the Crown produced against her.

Justice John Spelman, who reported on Anne's trial, wrote, "all the evidence was of bawdery and lechery, so that there was no such whore in the realm". He noted that the matter was disclosed posthumously by Lady Wingfield, a former lady of the queen's bedchamber. Unfortunately, Spelman's report is damaged and incomplete, but it appears that words of Lady Wingfield had served as evidence. Of course, she could not be called as a witness to clarify her meaning. Another source names Elizabeth Browne, Lady Worcester, as providing evidence against Anne. In an argument with her brother, a member of the king's privy chamber, Lady Worcester is said to have defended her morality by saying that she "was no worse than the queen who had offended with Mark Smeaton and her own brother". There is, however, no record of Lady Worcester being at court and Spelman makes no mention of her.

Nothing seemed to faze Anne. The chronicler Charles Wriothesley recorded that she "made so wise and discreet answers to all things laid against her, excusing herself with her words so clearly, as though she had never been faulty to the same." Despite her wise answers, the jury was unanimous in their verdict. Her uncle pronounced sentence, tears streaming down his face, stating that she would either be burnt at the stake or beheaded, according to the "King's pleasure".

After Anne had been escorted out of the hall, her brother, Lord Rochford, was brought to the bar and likewise charged with high treason. Like his sister, he defended himself admirably. Charles



Anne bids a final farewell to her ladies in waiting

> “The case against Rochford was weak – No witnesses were called, and the evidence amounted to hearsay – yet the jury was unanimous in finding him guilty”

Wriothesley recorded, “He made answers so prudently and wisely to all articles laid against him, that marvel it was to hear, and never would confess anything, but made himself as clear as though he had never offended.” Chapuys corroborated this, stating, “To all he replied so well that several of those present wagered ten to one that he would be acquitted, especially as no witnesses were produced against either him or her [...]”. Rochford knew, however, that he had no chance of justice. When he was handed a note with a warning not to repeat the contents, he read it aloud.

According to the note, the queen had told Rochford’s wife that the king was impotent. Rochford declared to the court that he would not “arouse any suspicion which might prejudice the king’s issue”. Regarding the charge that he had committed incest, “no proof of guilt was produced except that of his having once passed many hours in her company, and other little follies.” From the accounts of his trial, it appears that the case against Rochford was weak - no witnesses were called, and the evidence amounted to hearsay - yet the jury was unanimous in finding him guilty. Rochford was sentenced to a full traitor’s death, to be hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn. Rochford accepted his sentence stoically, his only reaction being to beg that the king would arrange the payment of his debts out of the goods seized from him.

On 17 May 1536, Rochford, Norris, Weston, Brereton and Smeaton were escorted to the scaffold on Tower Hill. Weston’s mother petitioned the king, offering “rents and goods for his deliverance”, which would have amounted to 100,000 crowns, and the French ambassadors pleaded for him, to no avail. However, in his ‘mercy’, the king commuted the men’s sentences to beheading.

It was important to die a ‘good death’ - to accept that you were a sinner deserving of death, regardless of whether you were innocent of the charges. You were expected to accept the law and judgement, and to praise the monarch. The men were executed in order of rank. Lord Rochford followed convention, acknowledging that he had been “judged under the law, and die under the law, and the law has condemned me”, but then he took the opportunity to preach to the crowd, urging those witnessing his death to "stick to the truth and follow it", confessing that he had read God's word but "did not follow it" and it had brought him to his death. "One good follower is worth three readers", was his sage advice. Norris was next, and George Constantine recorded how all the men confessed to deserving death, "All but Mr Norice, who sayed almost nothinge at all." Weston, Brereton and Smeaton followed suit.

Anne was shocked when she heard that Smeaton did not make any effort to retract his confession: "Did he not exonerate me [...] before he died, of the public infamy he laid on me? Alas! I fear his soul will suffer for it."

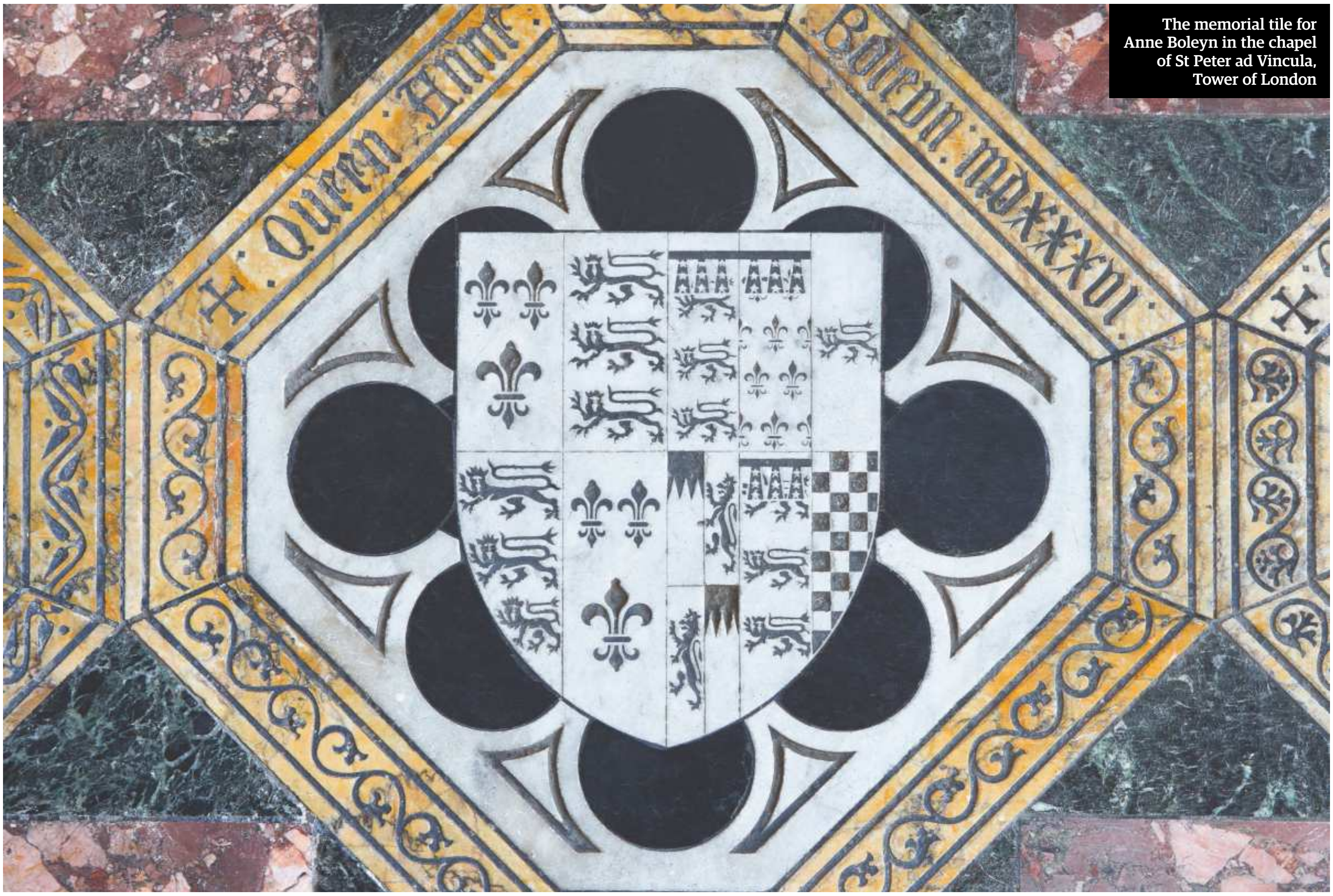
Her execution had been scheduled for 18 May so she prepared herself by spending the night in prayer. She made her last confession and celebrated the Mass in front of Sir William Kingston, swearing twice on the sacrament that she had never been unfaithful to the king. Anne waited, only to be told that her execution had been postponed until the following day. Anne's dignified demeanour, the way she comforted her ladies and joked about her "little neck" led to Kingston reporting that she had "much joy and pleasure in death".

"SHE MADE A SIMPLE SPEECH BEFORE FORGIVING THE EXECUTIONER FOR WHAT HE WAS ABOUT TO DO"

Finally, at 8am on 19 May, Kingston informed Anne that the time of her death was near. Anne was ready. She had taken great care with her outfit; her ermine trim showed her royal status and her kirtle was crimson, the colour of martyrdom, and, to top it off, she wore a traditional English gable hood. On the scaffold, she made a simple speech, sticking to execution protocol, before paying the visibly distressed swordsman of Calais and forgiving him for what he was about to do. A blindfolded Anne sank to her knees, praying: "O Lord have mercy on me, to God I commend my soul. To Jesus Christ I commend my soul; Lord Jesus receive my soul." The executioner, famed for his skill, took her head off with one stroke, and her ladies wrapped her remains in a white cloth before taking them to the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula. Cannons were fired to announce the queen's death to the people of London. On that same day, Archbishop Cranmer issued a dispensation for Henry VIII to marry Jane Seymour, which he did 11 days later.

Thomas Wyatt, who was released from the Tower along with Sir Richard Page, knew Anne and the men well, and it is clear from his poems that he considered them innocent. He knew, however, that "circa regna tonat", "about the throne, the thunder rolls", and that innocence did not protect anyone at the English court:

"By proof, I say, there did I learn:
Wit helpeth not defence too yerne,
Of innocency to plead or prate.
Bear low, therefore, give God the stern,
For sure, circa Regna tonat."



The memorial tile for Anne Boleyn in the chapel of St Peter ad Vincula, Tower of London

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RISE AND FALL OF THE BOLEYNS

Having a Boleyn mistress and then a Boleyn queen at the centre of power brought advantages, but royal favour had a nasty habit of morphing into ostracism – or a good deal worse – in Tudor England

Written by Jon Wright

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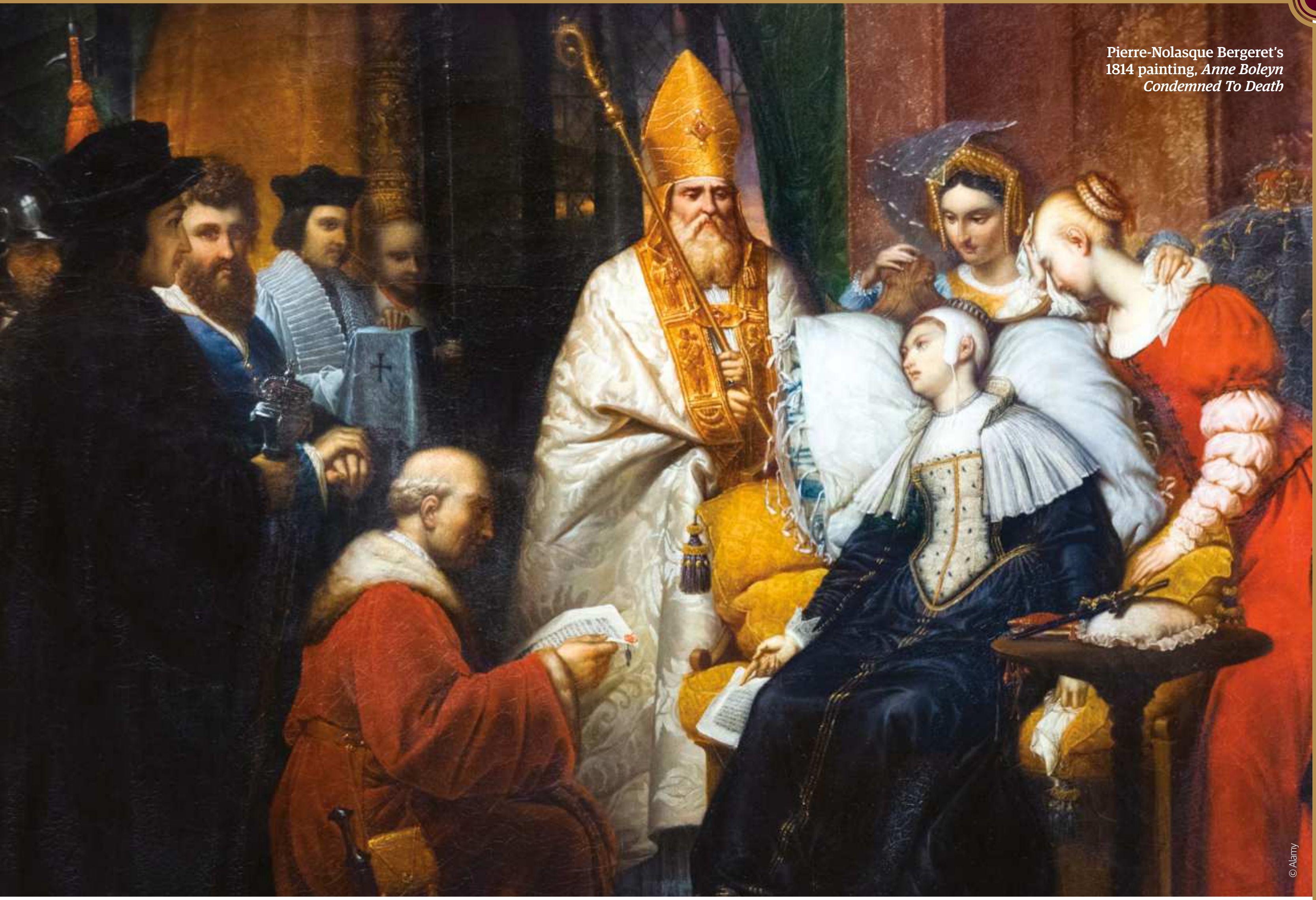

Pierre-Nolasque Bergeret's 1814 painting, *Anne Boleyn Condemned To Death*

© Alamy

Let us begin with the patriarch: Thomas Boleyn (1476/7-1539) had worked hard to advance the family's cause long before his charismatic daughters Mary and Anne claimed the spotlight of Henrician politics. Marrying Elizabeth, the daughter of Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey and future duke of Norfolk in c.1499 was a masterstroke: the Howards were seated at society's top table and the Boleyns' status skyrocketed. The young Henry VIII was also rather keen on Thomas Boleyn, not least because of the latter's prowess in the never-ending round of quasi-chivalric tournaments. Early in the reign Thomas was made a Knight of the Bath and Keeper of the Exchange at Calais, but diplomacy was his true calling. He was an intelligent man (a correspondent of Erasmus, no less) and was said to have the best French at court. Thomas first flexed his negotiating muscles in 1512 at the court of the Archduchess Margaret, ruler of the Habsburg Low Countries. While there, he convinced the emperor Maximilian to join important alliances and his impeccable manners also allowed Thomas to secure a much sought-after posting for his daughter Anne in Margaret's household.

> “Thomas Boleyn was granted titles during his daughter Mary's sexual liaison with Henry”

By the early 1520s, Thomas was starting to make great strides on the domestic front, too. He was appointed as Treasurer of the Household in 1522, joined the Order of the Garter in 1523 and, in 1525, was elevated to the title of Viscount Rochford. It is perhaps no coincidence that these prizes were gathered during the period of his daughter Mary's sexual liaison with Henry, although Thomas had proven himself to be a valuable asset and may well have been rewarded without Mary's cheerleading.

Thomas even began to wonder if his great masterplan might come to fruition. Via his mother, Margaret, he had a strong claim to the vast Irish estates, wealth and influence of the earldom of Ormond. Unfortunately, another claimant, Piers Butler, simply assumed the title and its many perquisites in 1515 when the earldom became vacant. Henry VIII had no desire to alienate such a formidable figure, but perhaps some kind of compromise could be achieved. What if Piers's son, James, were to marry Thomas's daughter Anne? One day the earldom would pass to the issue or descendants of this union. In fact, none of the concerned parties were particularly keen on the plan, which got an airing in around 1522: not James, not Anne and certainly not Piers. Even Thomas lacked enthusiasm: he wanted to claim the earldom in his own right, not via some convoluted dynastic scheme.

Meanwhile the dominance of Thomas Wolsey at Henry's court was becoming a bugbear: the cardinal sought to accrue as much power in his hands as possible and did not look kindly upon potential rivals like Thomas Boleyn. Wolsey's fall from grace in 1529 was therefore a source of some relief. A major run of triumphs began

Hever Castle was the traditional family home of the Boleyns and where Mary and Anne Boleyn grew up

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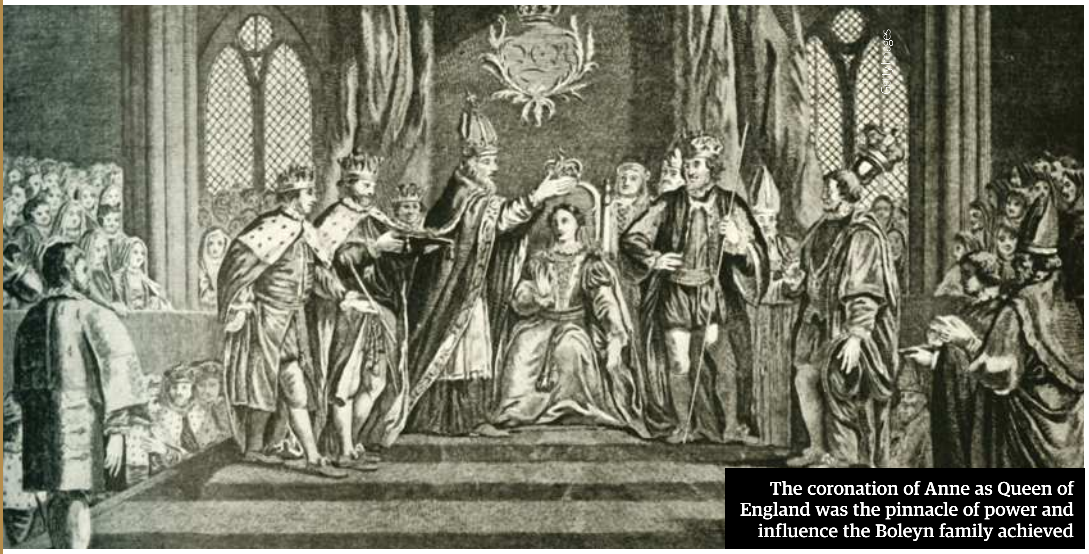

The coronation of Anne as Queen of England was the pinnacle of power and influence the Boleyn family achieved

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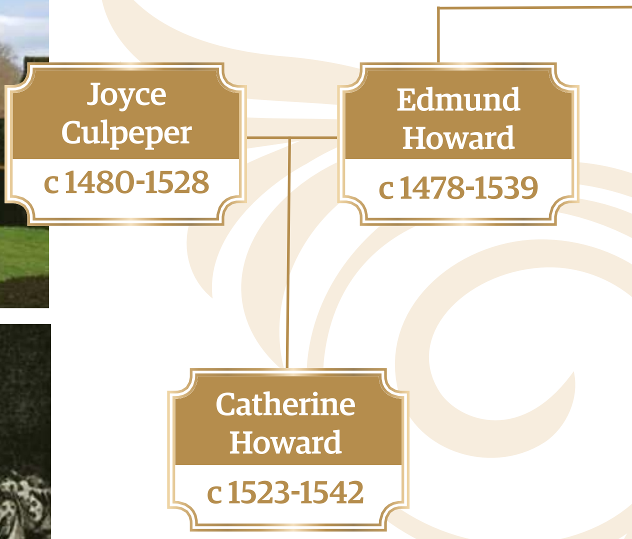


to stack up. In 1529, Thomas finally secured his most cherished goal - securing the earldom of Ormond, with the earldom of Wiltshire thrown in for good measure. The imperial ambassador, Eustace Chapuys, commented, with some irritation, on how close Boleyn and the king were becoming. His place in the king's affections "increases daily… it is so great just now that it could hardly be greater, such is the intimacy and familiarity in which [Henry and Boleyn] live." Thomas was also made Lord Privy Seal in 1530.

Anne Boleyn's ascendancy had a great deal to do with all this and, using his diplomatic skills, Thomas strove to win continental support for the divorce from Catherine of Aragon and eagerly supported the legislation that would carry through the break with Rome and establish Henry as supreme head of an independent English Church. Then, as we all know, things began to fall apart.

In what must have seemed like no time at all, Anne and her brother George were cast out of favour and both ended up on the scaffold. The record shows that Thomas did very little to help his children (he even sat in judgement of the other men accused of committing adultery with the queen) but, in truth, what could he possibly have achieved? The machinations of faction at Henry's court had a power far beyond any individual's control. Historians have often taken a dim view of Thomas. As eminent a scholar as David Loades sums him up in less than flattering terms: "it was through the sexuality of his daughters that Sir Thomas Boleyn became a great man… and by the same means that he was brought low." He was, it is suggested, just another power-hungry courtier but that only made him unexceptional, not an indifferent monster. Such behaviour - including the commodification of one's daughters - was, however regrettably, the way the game was played.

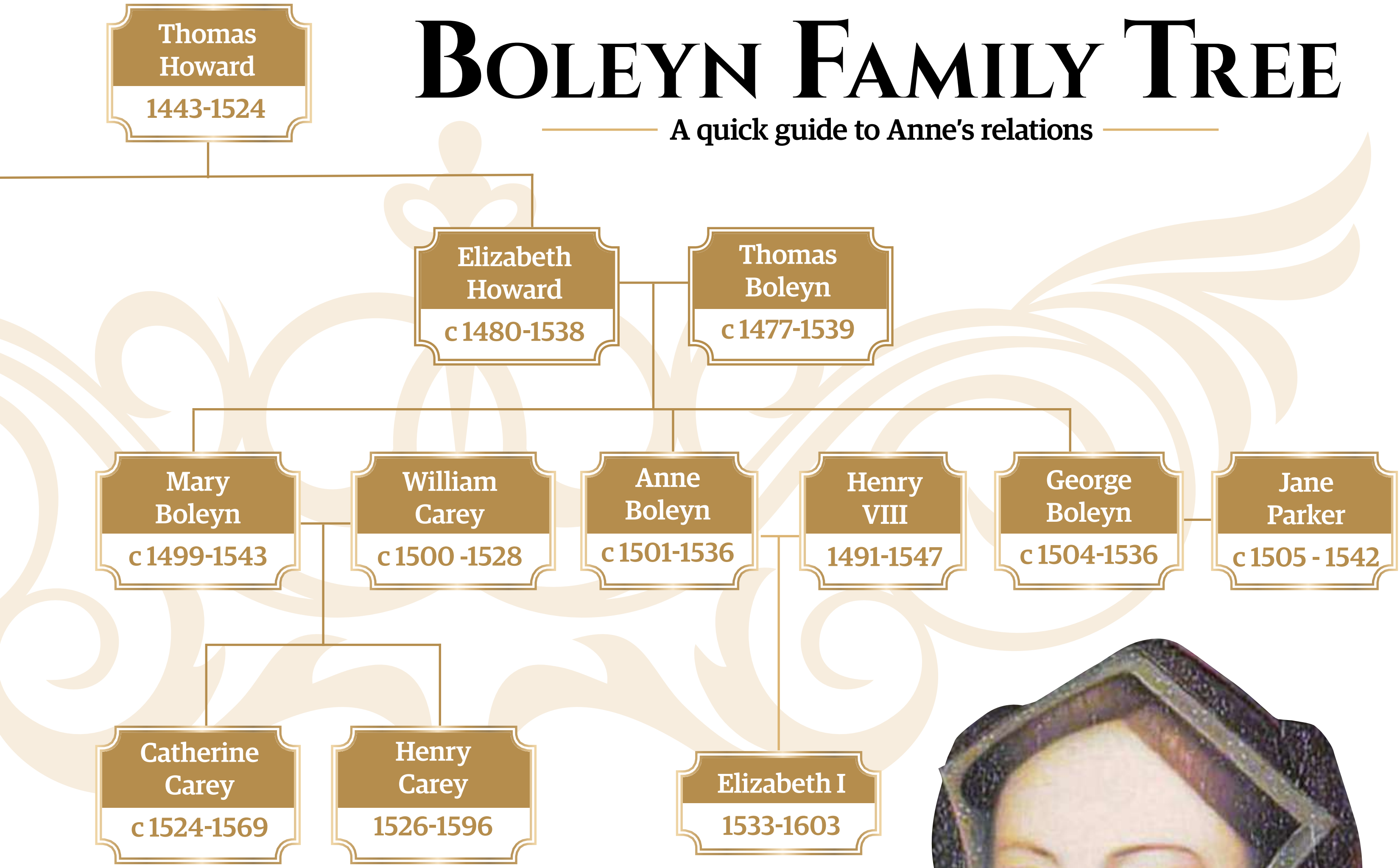
We can, at least, be sure that the loss of his children brought an end to Thomas's glittering career. Henry's affection did not simply evaporate: Thomas would be invited to play a role in the christening of the king's new son, Edward, in 1537, for example - though perhaps this was an exercise in twisting the knife. Certainly, the money and lofty offices all had to go. Boleyn was no longer Lord Privy Seal, the earldom of Ormond was handed back to Piers Butler, and Thomas and his wife retired to life in the country. Elizabeth died in 1538, with Thomas passing on in the following year. He was laid to rest at St Peter's Church, Hever.

When it came to ambition, George Boleyn (1504-1536) was a chip off the old block. Just like his father, he was making steady progress up the greasy political pole long before the dramas of Anne Boleyn began to unfold. He had been made a royal page in 1516, developed an impressive property portfolio by the mid-1520s, and become a familiar presence in the Privy Chamber. Also in common with his father, he was treated with suspicion by Wolsey but George simply spent a little more time in the country with his new wife, Jane Parker, the daughter of Lord Morley.

A welcome boost arrived in 1529 when George was dubbed Viscount Rochford (his father's old title was now available because of Thomas's newly acquired earldoms of Wiltshire and Ormond) and then, to many people's surprise,

BOLEYN FAMILY TREE

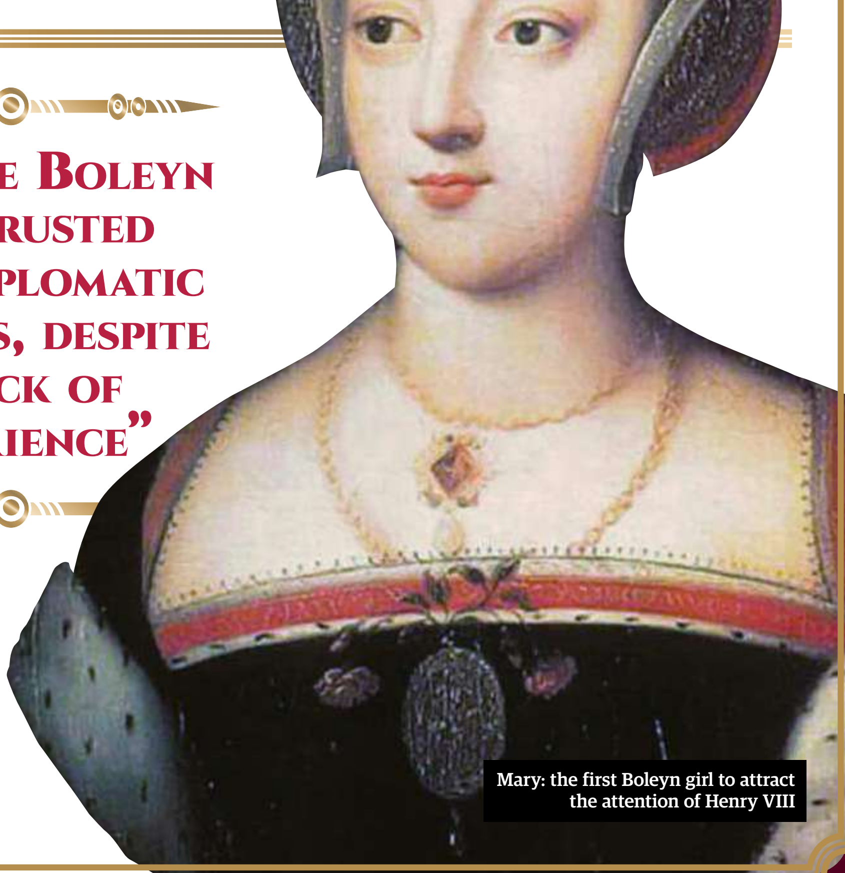
A quick guide to Anne's relations


Thomas Howard
1443-1524
Elizabeth Howard
c 1480-1538
Thomas Boleyn
c 1477-1539
Mary Boleyn
c 1499-1543
William Carey
c 1500 -1528
Anne Boleyn
c 1501-1536
Henry VIII
1491-1547
George Boleyn
c 1504-1536
Jane Parker
c 1505 - 1542
Catherine Carey
c 1524-1569
Henry Carey
1526-1596
Elizabeth I
1533-1603

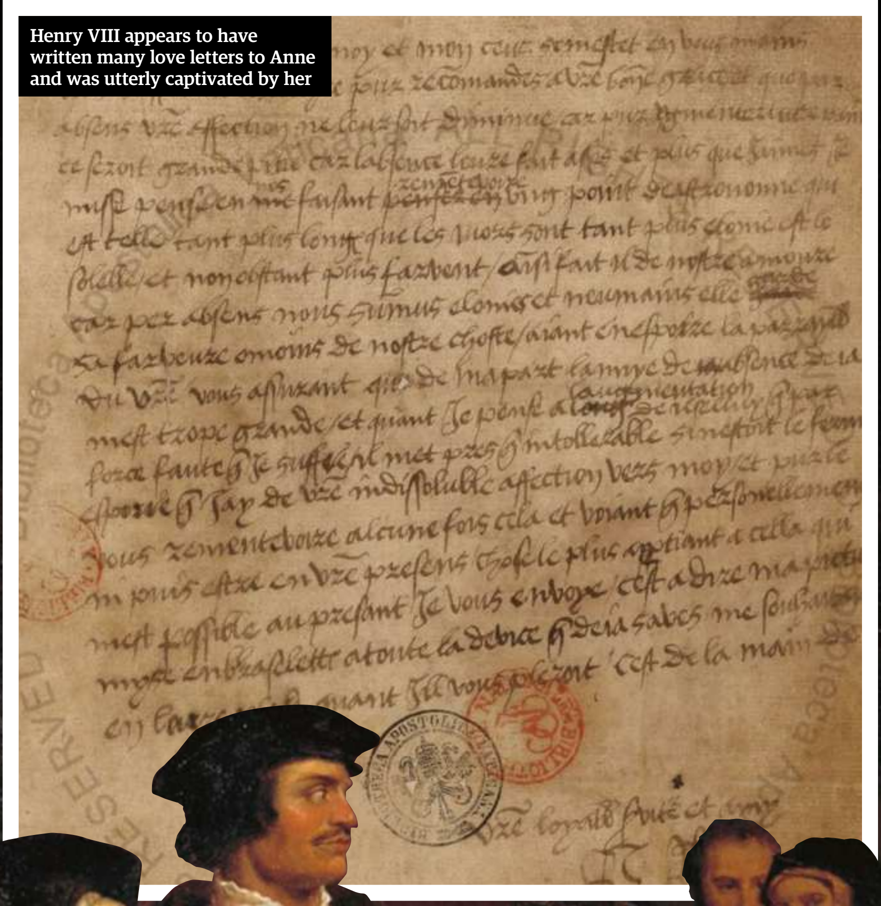
George began to be trusted with important diplomatic missions, despite a lack of experience. Anne's promising steps on the road towards queenship doubtless improved George's prospects and he was happy to support the divorce from Catherine and the momentous break with Rome. Even more than his sister, George was attracted to the currents of religious reform circulating in 16th-century Europe: he came very close, perhaps, to a genuinely Protestant outlook. George may have taken particular pleasure in being charged with informing the French king, in 1533, that Anne and Henry's marriage had taken place, and he contributed to subsequent efforts to rekindle a more positive relationship between the two monarchs: Francis I, after all, was not one to let religious affiliation stand in the way of good statecraft.

All told, the early 1530s were good years for George Boleyn. He mopped up new manors and offices – including the wardenship of the Cinque Ports in 1534 (a very lucrative post) – and was in the thick of things during many significant events, notably the 1535 trial of Thomas More. George's religious leanings did not make him a natural

> "GEORGE BOLEYN WAS TRUSTED WITH DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS, DESPITE A LACK OF EXPERIENCE"



Mary: the first Boleyn girl to attract the attention of Henry VIII

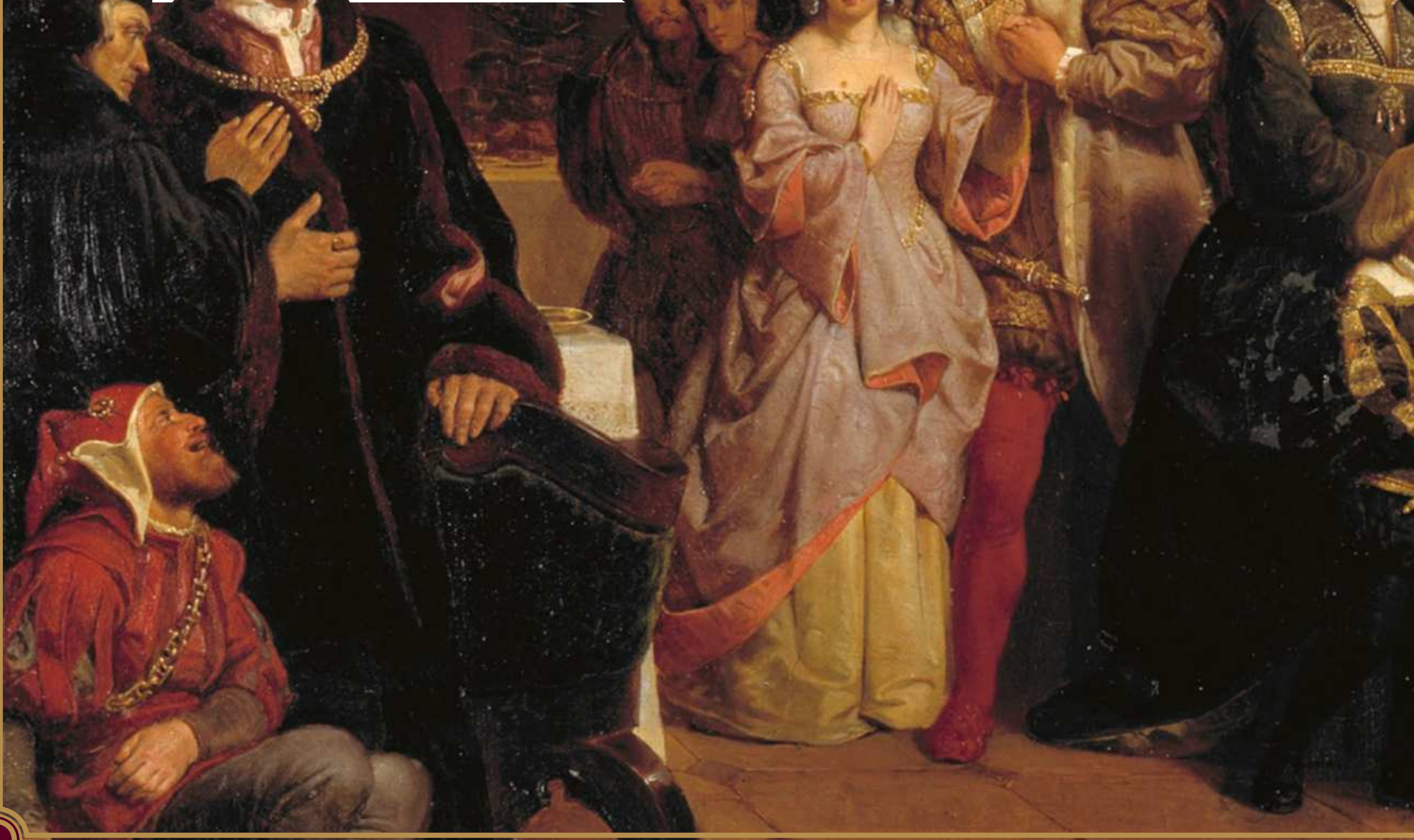


Henry VIII appears to have written many love letters to Anne and was utterly captivated by her

playmate of the king, but he was always willing to participate in courtly recreations, which greatly pleased Henry. In 1532, for instance, George won £45 from Henry during a shuffleboard marathon and, a year later, a game of bowls with Henry netted him £9 32s 5d (his father had an even better day, coming away with £13 10s).

Unfortunately, Anne's fall from grace soon began to impact George's prospects. He was passed over for entry to the Knights of the Garter in early 1536 and, rather more importantly, Anne's enemies quickly realised that George was a skilled courtly operator who would naturally defend his sister. Getting rid of George was an absolute necessity, though the chosen methods turned out to be rather unsavoury.

Some of the charges levelled at George in 1536 were ludicrous, most notably the idea that George enjoyed an incestuous relationship with



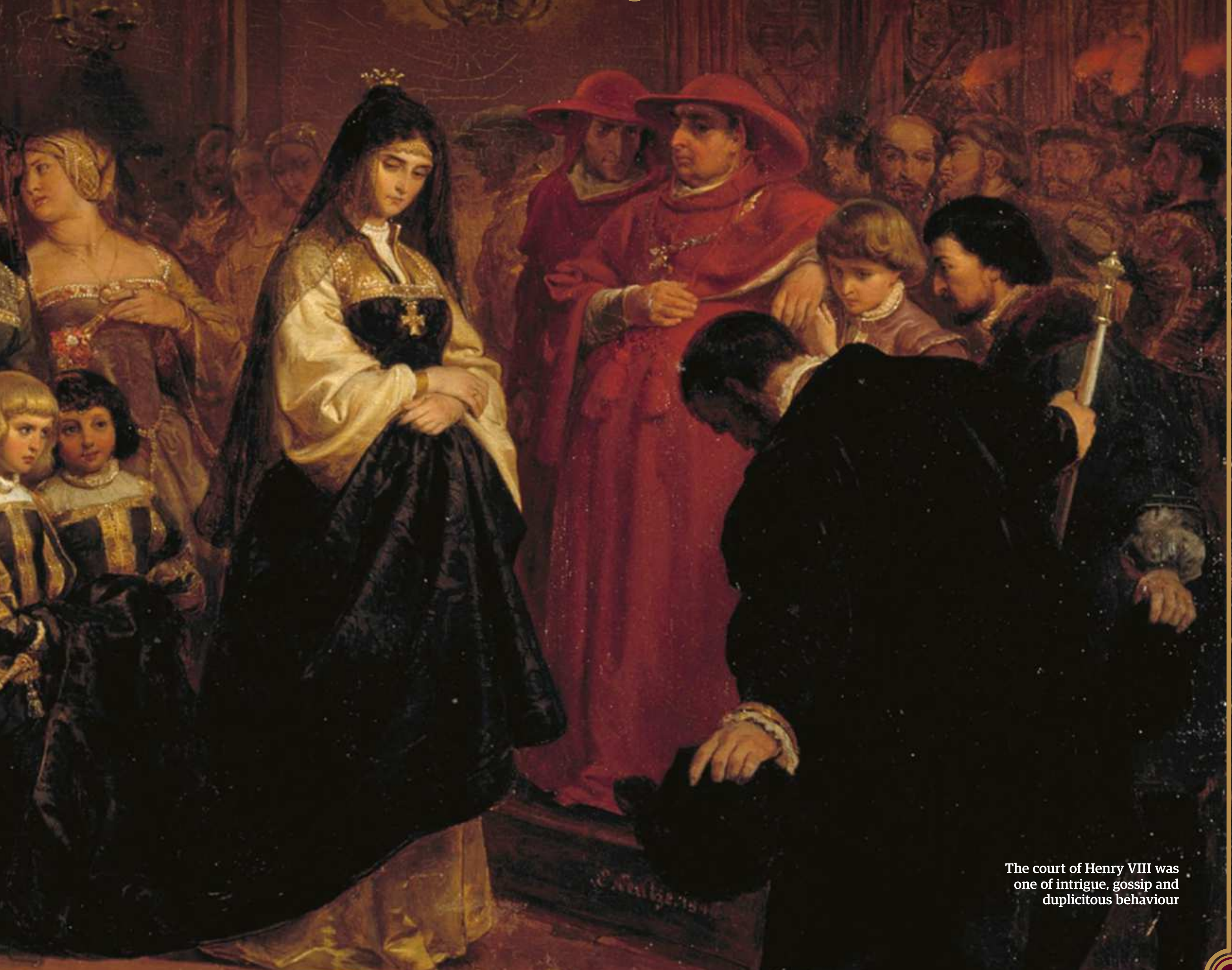
Anne. The only evidence was a report that George sometimes spent time visiting Anne in her rooms. Any suggestion that Anne and George were planning to kill the king seems equally far-fetched. The idea that George was, in some way, attached to rumours about Henry's loss of sexual prowess (having neither "vigour or virtue") was not beyond the realms of possibility. Perhaps Anne had made some joke to George's wife, and perhaps she had passed this on. Fairly harmless, aside from the fact that it would have constituted treason: to query the king's manhood would be to pour doubt on the legitimacy of his children.

It has long been suggested that George's wife Jane was, as it were, in on the plot and spread rumours in order to blacken Anne's name: she was not, it has been argued, the queen's greatest supporter by the mid 1530s. Others have recently argued that Jane and Anne got on perfectly well and any manoeuvring on Jane's part resulted from a desire to get ahead of the storm that was obviously brewing. Whatever the details, it seems highly probable that George was innocent. You could get very good odds on his likely acquittal during the betting frenzy that preceded the pronouncement of his guilt.

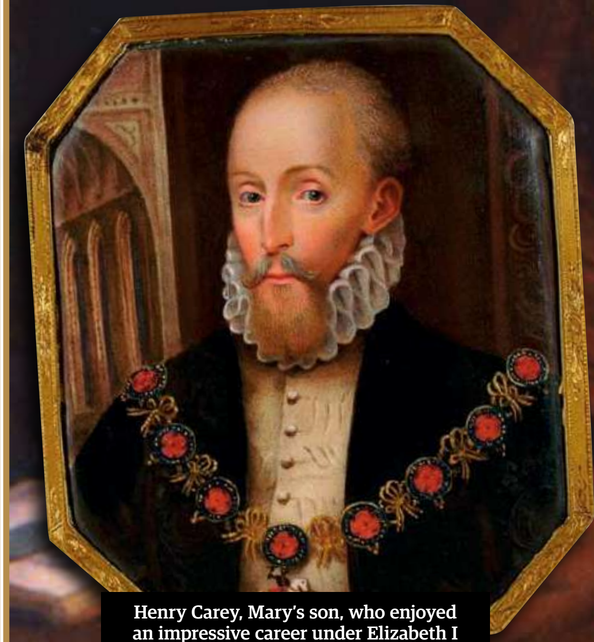
George retained hope of a reprieve. Sir William Kingston, Constable of the Tower, reported to Cromwell on May 16 that George was still asking for a personal meeting with the king. The communications between Kingston and Cromwell were blunt. "The time is short, for the king supposeth the gentleman to die tomorrow." George was more than a little miffed, of course, for "he assumed that he would have received his rights," but "I have told my Lord of Rochford that he be in a-readiness tomorrow to suffer execution, and so he accepts it very well."

And ready he proved to be. It can at least be said of George Boleyn that he died in a dignified manner. "I am born under the law, judged under the law, and die under the law," he declared from the scaffold on May 17. He ended by

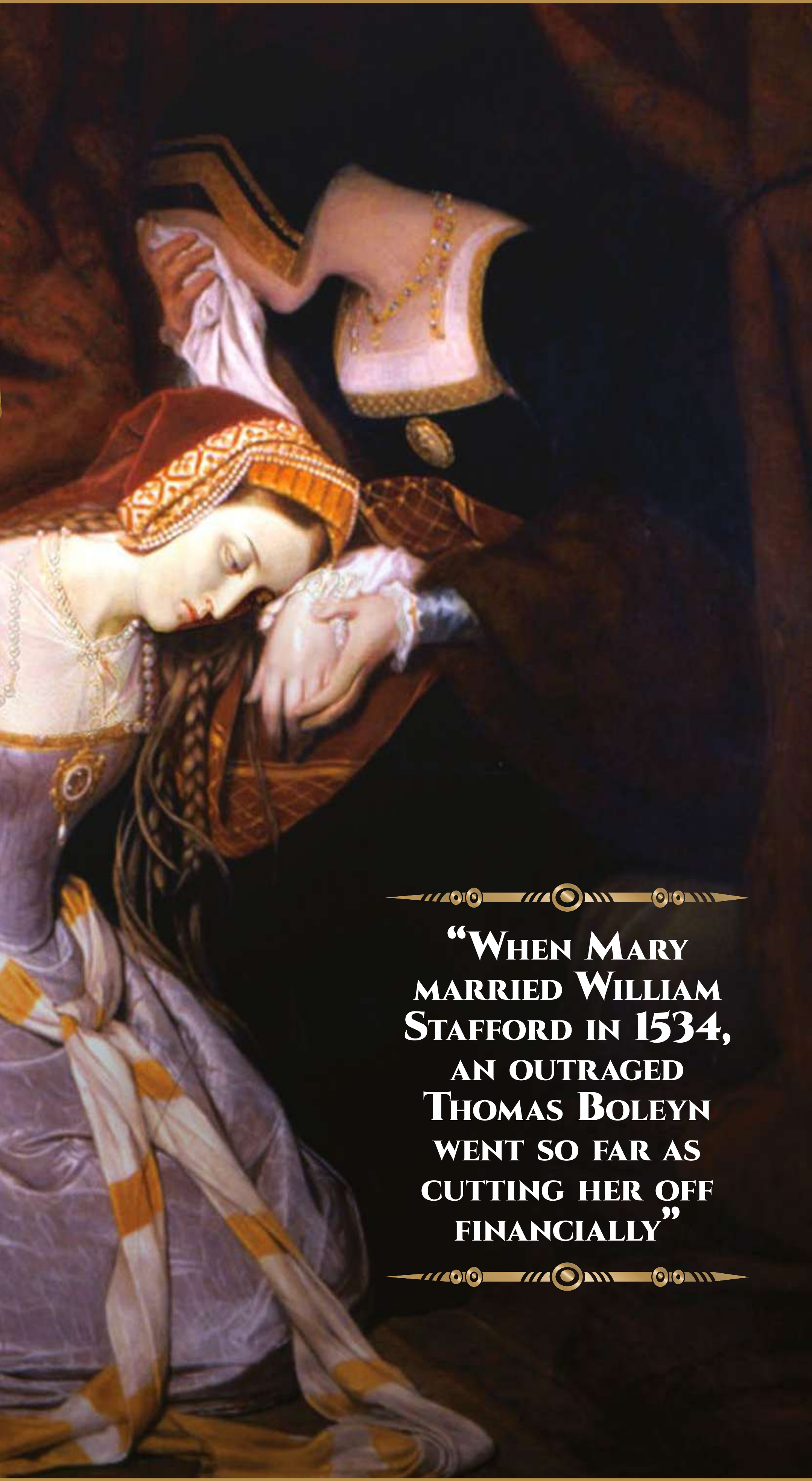
> "GEORGE WAS CHARGED WITH HAVING AN INCESTUOUS RELATIONSHIP WITH ANNE"



The court of Henry VIII was one of intrigue, gossip and duplicitous behaviour

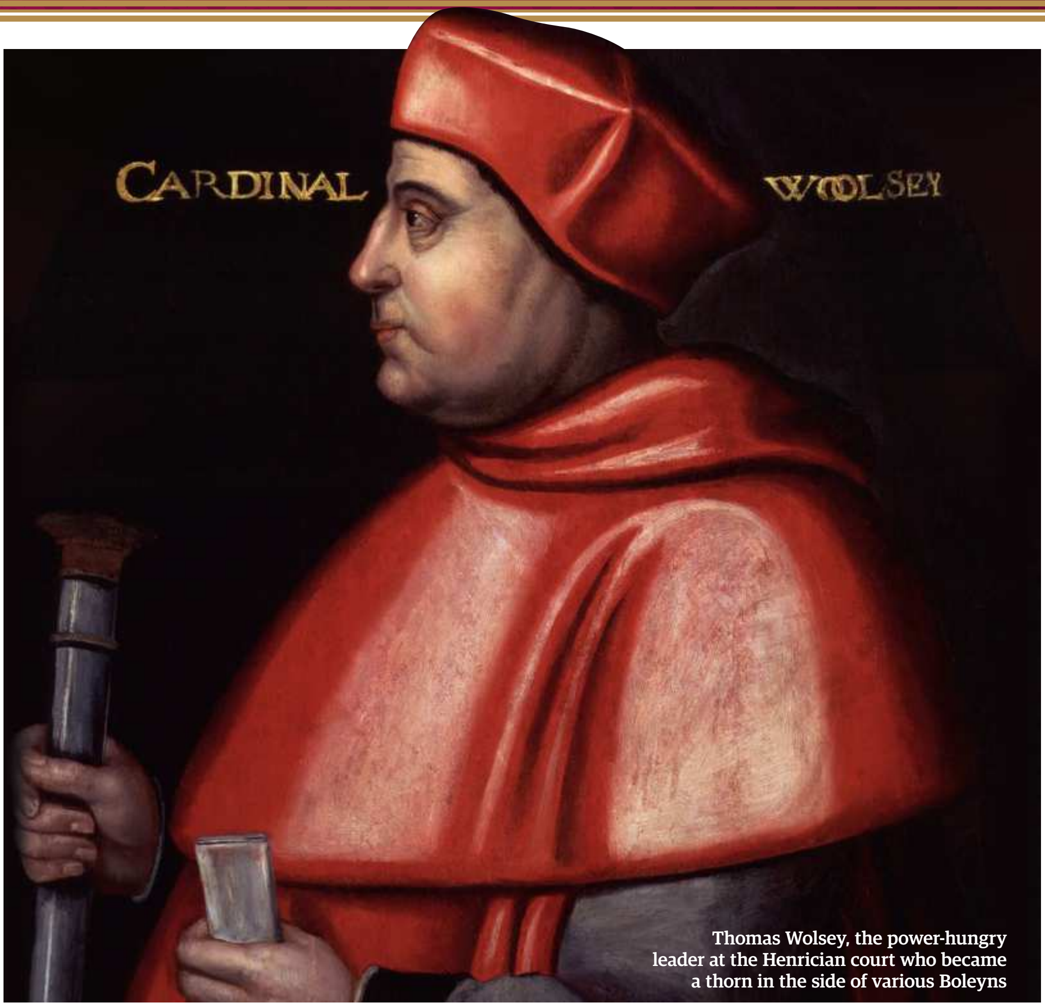


Henry Carey, Mary's son, who enjoyed an impressive career under Elizabeth I because of enduring family ties



Anne was sent to the Tower on trumped-up charges

> "When Mary married William Stafford in 1534, an outraged Thomas Boleyn went so far as cutting her off financially"



Thomas Wolsey, the power-hungry leader at the Henrician court who became a thorn in the side of various Boleyns

pardoning those who'd condemned him to death and by asking the people to pray for his soul.

It was a terrible month for the Boleyns but at least Thomas still had his other daughter, Mary. Well, yes and no. The family had been delighted to see Mary flourish, alongside Anne, at the French court. A few years later, her affair with Henry VIII was no secret and the whole family reaped the benefits between 1522 and 1525. Even Mary's husband, William Carey, did rather well out of the situation, being showered in properties and royal offices: as good a way as any to placate a Tudor spouse. Mary retained a place in the king's affections after their sexual encounters petered out and when Mary's husband died in 1528 Henry made certain that the Boleyn family took care of the widow and her children. Then Mary took a false step by marrying William Stafford in 1534. He was regarded as being beneath Mary's dignity and an outraged Thomas Boleyn went so far as cutting Mary off financially. She was reduced to pleading with Thomas Cromwell to intervene: "for well I might have had a greater man of birth and a higher, but I assure you that I could never have had one that should have loved me so well." The deaths of Anne and George at least helped to bring about a reconciliation between Thomas and Mary and she was allowed to live out her days with her husband at the well-appointed Boleyn property of Rochford Hall, Essex, where she breathed her last in 1543.

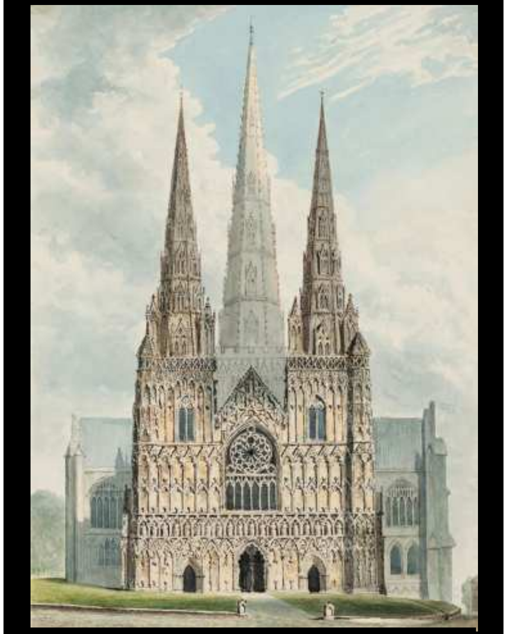
The Boleyn story did not end there. Mary's son Henry always had a cloud of illegitimacy hanging over him because of the timing of his birth (1526), but it seems likely that he was the true son of Mary's first husband, William Carey, and conceived after the end of Mary's affair with Henry VIII. He served particularly well during Elizabeth I's reign under his new title, Baron Hunsdon. A competent courtier and Knight of the Garter, he played a major role in suppressing rebellion in Northern England and reached the dizzy heights of Privy Councillor in 1577 and Lord Chamberlain of the Household in 1585. The queen was unusually indulgent when Henry questioned the direction of policy but, after all, he was her cousin or, if the bastardy rumours were true, her half-brother.

Elizabeth had a similar soft spot for Mary's daughter, Catherine, born circa 1523. Married to the eminently eligible Sir Francis Knollys in 1540, Catherine always had a place as one of four waged ladies of the queen's bedchamber, though this did mean having to endure Elizabeth's tantrums and bad moods. At Catherine's death in 1569 the monarch was said to be heartbroken, became "forgetful of her own health", and spent a massive sum (£640) on a lavish funeral. These resurgences in the Boleyn family's favour were a happy ending of sorts and a reminder that the most impressive Boleyn of them all ended up doing very nicely for herself: her name was Queen Elizabeth I.

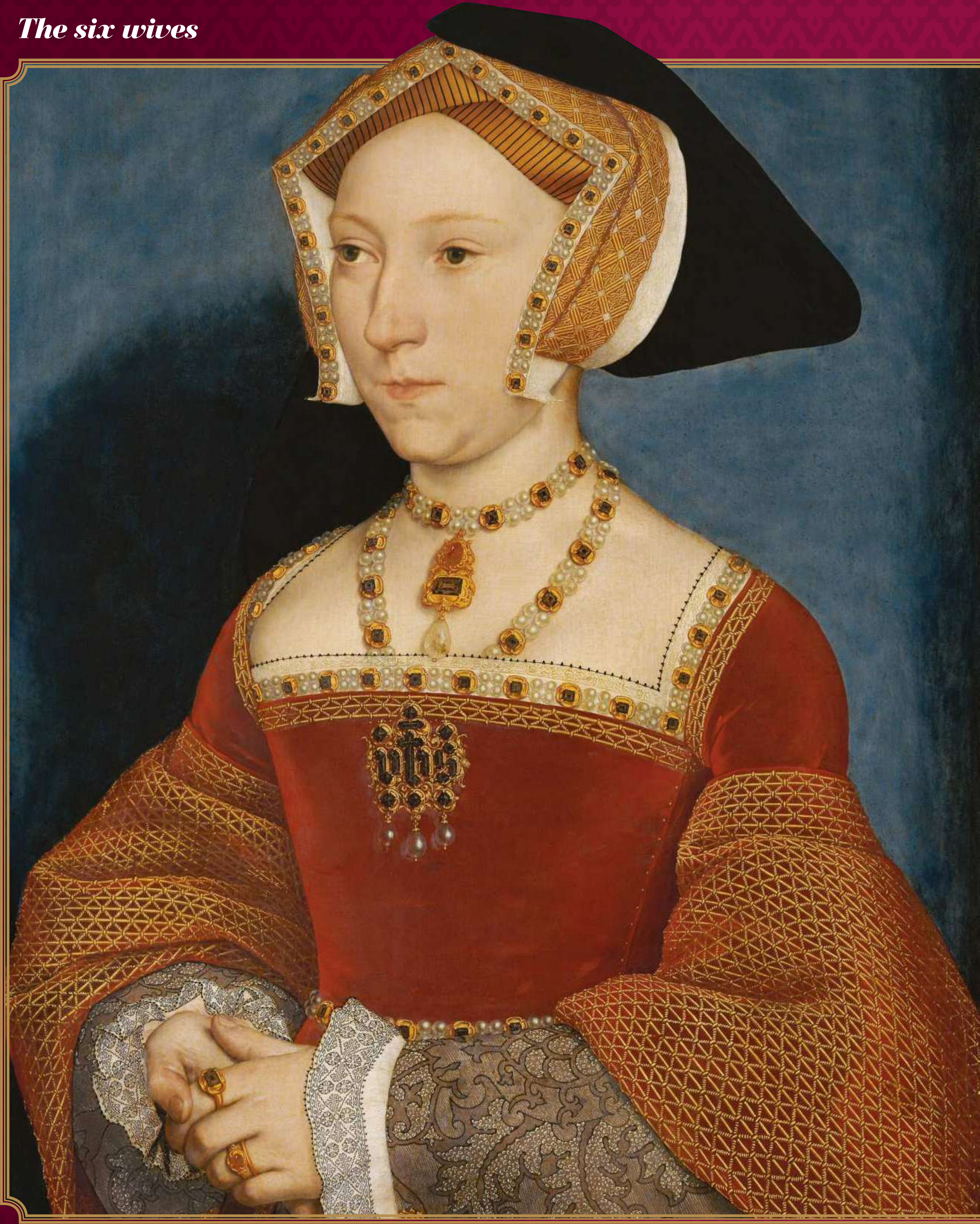
THE OTHER BOLEYN BOY

Scandal continued to plague the family name

A less satisfying career awaited another member of the next generation of Boleyns. The parentage of George Boleyn is unclear. Some have suggested that he was the son of the earlier, more famous George (Viscount Rochford), though if so there is a disappointing lack of documentary evidence. Others have hypothesised that he may have been a distant cousin of Anne Boleyn. In any event, this was not enough to secure him any great advantages during Elizabeth I's reign. He spent much of his time grumbling about being overlooked and not receiving his due as a genuine Boleyn. He did, however, manage to carve out a respectable ecclesiastical career, including promotion to prebendary at Canterbury in 1566. Unfortunately, he had a sour temper. At one point he threatened to nail the cathedral dean to a wall and, a little later, attacked a preacher with a dagger. A short suspension ensued and while George formally kept the prebendaryship, it was deemed wise to move him to a new position. He served at churches in London and Bangor and even managed to secure a new role as prebendary at Lichfield in 1576. He was a less-than-enthusiastic administrator but he did have a softer side. His dog was always allowed to attend George's services and bark as loudly as it chose.



The west front of Lichfield Cathedral, one of George's loftier workplaces



THE ONE TRUE WIFE

How one woman rose from humble origins to become King Henry VIII's favourite wife

Written by Jessica Leggett

Out of all of King Henry VIII's six wives, it is said that Jane Seymour, his third wife, was his most beloved. In spite of this, perhaps because her time as queen was brief, Jane's story is often overshadowed by the scandalous drama surrounding Henry's divorce and the spectacular rise and fall of her predecessor, Anne Boleyn. So just how did Jane Seymour become Henry's so-called true love?

For a queen of England, Jane had humble beginnings. The daughter of Sir John Seymour and Margery Wentworth - members of the gentry - Jane grew up at Wolf Hall, the family home in Wiltshire. Her date of birth remains a mystery, but it is commonly believed she was born around 1508.

Much like Jane's birthday, there is little surviving evidence to suggest what kind of a formal education she received as a child - in fact, there are scarcely any records of her life before her time at the royal court at all. Consequently, she is frequently labelled as uneducated even though she was in fact literate. However, we do know she received a fairly typical education of the household, and was skilled in needlework and embroidery.

The term 'plain Jane' seems to be the perfect embodiment of Henry's third wife. The imperial ambassador at court, and ally of Catherine of Aragon, Eustace Chapuys famously stated that Jane was "no great beauty", this perhaps evident due to the fact that her younger sister, Elizabeth, married before her. Even in her portraiture, Jane appears rather ordinary - though our modern interpretation of beauty probably differs from that of the Tudors.

Jane was around 19 years old when she arrived at court to join Catherine's household, a relatively old age to enter the courtly game. How exactly Jane earned her place into the royal fold is unknown, but it is usually attributed to either her father or to her kinsman, Sir Francis Bryan, an influential courtier. Regardless of which is correct, we know that by 1531, Jane was a member of the royal court.

During her time in Catherine's household, it is clear that Jane remained in obscurity while her second cousin, Anne Boleyn, commanded all the attention. Thanks to her position, Jane had a front-row seat to the chaos and turmoil which soon descended with the king's 'Great Matter'. Henry's wife and his mistress were not-so-secretly battling each other, a situation that was exacerbated when Anne Boleyn formed her own household worthy to rival Catherine's.

Jane, along with the rest of Catherine's ladies-in-waiting, was in an extremely difficult situation. Not only did she have to remain loyal to the queen she had come to love and respect, but she also had to take care not to offend the woman who had clearly become the king's all-consuming obsession. It was a thin - and dangerous - line Jane had to navigate.

After trying to rid himself of his queen, Henry had lost his patience and exiled Catherine to the rundown palace The More, located in Hertfordshire, sometime around 1531. As the queen took her household with her, Jane was faced with uncertainty over her future and place at court, which depended on her mistress.

After two years in limbo, Henry made the astonishing announcement that he had married Anne and his marriage to Catherine was officially void. At this point Catherine was stripped of her title and privileges as queen, which included paying for her household.

Jane, along with the majority of Catherine's household, was forced to leave and return home. Her future looked rather bleak, as she was now in her mid-twenties with little to no marriage prospects. For a short time, it seemed that luck was finally on Jane's side as she briefly became engaged to William Dormer, son of Sir Robert Dormer, and who incidentally would go on to become an esteemed knight himself.

Although Jane's feelings regarding the match are unknown, it is likely she felt relieved and maybe even happy. After all, to have reached her age and remain unmarried in the 16th century was essentially a path to spinsterhood, which was not a future desired by many women at the time.

Yet as it turned out, Jane would have her engagement cruelly ripped away. The Dormers had decided that she was not an advantageous bride, hailing from a large gentry family considered of inferior birth, with little spare cash to offer a decent dowry. With the end of her engagement to William, Jane had no options for marriage, nor did she have an immediate way to return to the glamorous Tudor court. Instead, she remained languishing at Wolf Hall, unaware of what lay ahead.

While Jane stayed at the family home her eldest brother, Edward Seymour, had made a name for himself at Henry's court. It is perhaps because of Edward and his rise in status that Jane found herself appointed to Anne Boleyn's household in 1535 and therefore able to return to court – but once she arrived, it was clear to see the atmosphere had changed once again.

During Jane's time away, Anne had gone from being Henry's beloved wife to a woman he was growing desperately tired of. They had been married for two years, but between the birth of their daughter Elizabeth, and one miscarriage, Anne had failed to provided Henry with the male heir he desired. Her bold and vivacious nature which had attracted him all those years ago, now filled the king with contempt.

> "HENRY HAD BEGUN TO OPENLY COURT HIS NEW, MILD-MANNERED MISTRESS"

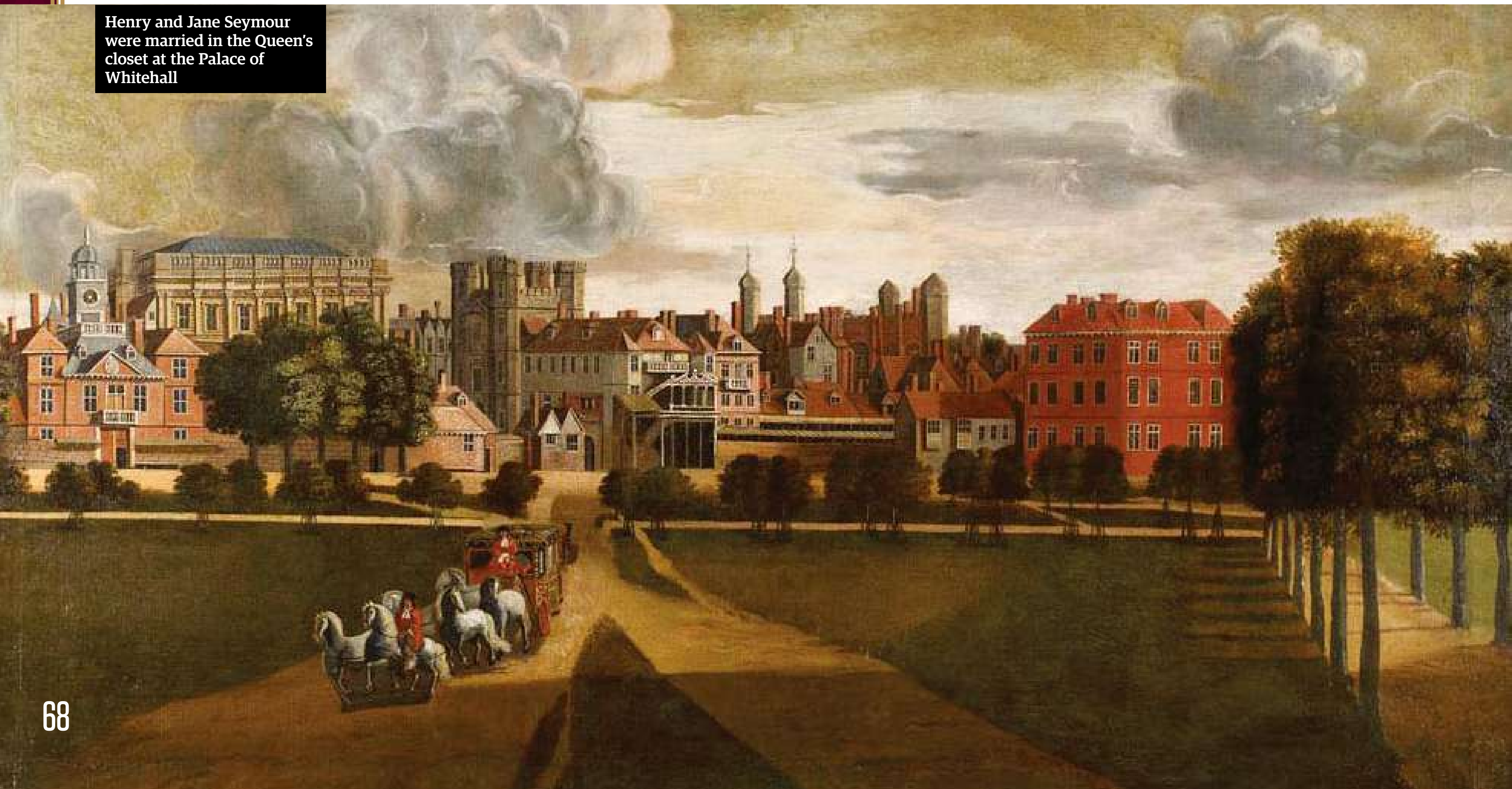
It is no wonder that Henry, a man whose mood seemed in constant flux, caught sight of Jane with his wandering eye while staying at Wolf Hall with the queen during the summer of 1535. With her pale skin, blonde hair and meek demeanour, Jane was the complete opposite to the raven-haired, olive-skinned and passionate Anne. They were so different that it might have surprised Jane to discover that the king had taken a fancy to her.

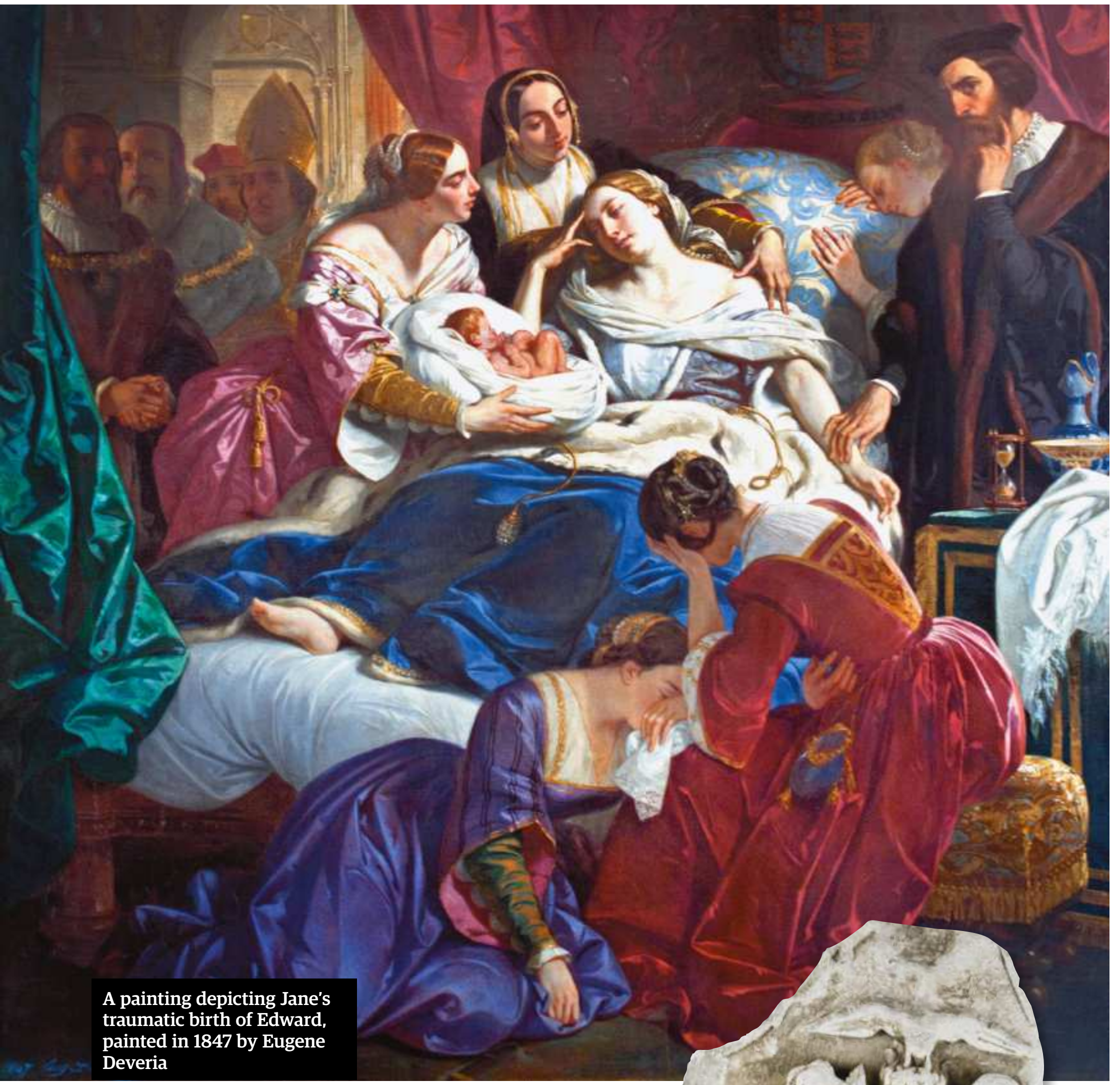
By November of that year, the French ambassador at the English court had taken note of the king's burgeoning affair with Jane. Henry was enamoured with his new lover and attempted to shower her with gifts. But Jane refused them, including a purse of gold coins, in order to protect her reputation. This virtuous act did nothing to dissuade the king from his suit, and in fact made him even more determined to marry Jane.

As the new year dawned, Henry had begun to openly court his new, mild-mannered mistress, much to the fury of his queen. In a chronicle written by Jane Dormer, the daughter of Jane's former fiancée, she recorded that there was "scratching and bye blows between the queen and her maid" – although it must also be noted that Dormer herself had not been born at this point, laying some doubt to the accuracy of her account.

However, Dormer's account is not the only mention of conflict between Jane and her queen that appeared after the fact. Among the gifts Henry tried to bestow onto his lady love was a locket, which Jane chose to accept. According to Thomas Fuller in his 17th-century work, History of the Worthies of England, when Anne saw Jane wearing the necklace she knew what it meant, as Henry had previously given her a similar gift when she was his mistress.

Angered, Anne tore it from Jane's neck with such force that she caused her own hand to bleed. However, she would have hardly noticed her injury once she saw Henry's portrait inside the locket. As Fuller noted, this was supposedly the moment where Anne could see "her own declining and the other's ascending, in her husband's affection".


Henry and Jane Seymour were married in the Queen's closet at the Palace of Whitehall



A painting depicting Jane's traumatic birth of Edward, painted in 1847 by Eugene Deveria

The queen's tragic fate was sealed when she miscarried a male child in January 1536, which she blamed on catching the king with Jane sitting his lap. Her position had become untenable, particularly as Catherine of Aragon had also passed away that very same month. While Catherine remained alive, there were always those who remained steadfast in their belief that she was the rightful queen, not Anne.

Now Henry had the perfect opportunity in his hands. With Catherine dead, it was now possible for him to have a legitimate son who would be approved by everyone – he just had to rid himself of Anne, the scapegoat for everybody's hatred. In a surviving letter, we know that by this point he was now referring to Jane as his "dear friend and mistress." In the same letter he says: "The bearer of these few lines from thy entirely devoted servant will deliver into thy fairs hands a token of my true affection for thee, hoping you will keep it for ever in your sincere love for me."

In comparison to the sickly love letters he sent to Anne, this letter seems less fervent, and the king even attempted to be more discreet with his new affair, aware of the criticism he received when

A fragment of a heraldic shield excavated at Hampton Court Palace, displaying the arms of Jane Seymour: a gateway, a hawthorn tree and a golden phoenix

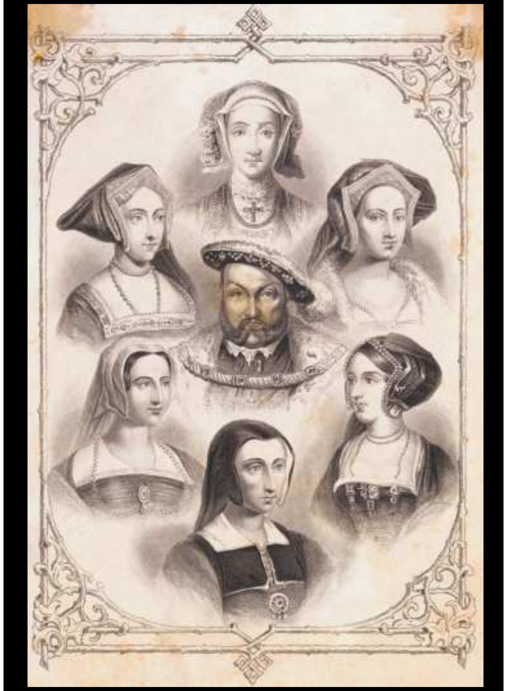
PUPPET OR PLAYER?

Was Jane more conniving than she appeared?

History has painted Jane as the antithesis to Anne Boleyn, supposedly forced to seek Henry's affections by her family, to facilitate their own rise at court. But was Jane really that innocent?

There is no doubt that the Seymours hoped that Jane would replace Anne and that they would finally receive the status that they craved – ultimately, they would retain Henry's favour for the rest of his reign and that of Edward's. Yet it is also possible that Jane, on the verge of spinsterhood, also wanted a better future for herself and was willing to do whatever it took to get it. After all, Jane employed the same tactics that Anne Boleyn had once used to entice Henry, refusing to be just his mistress. Where Anne emphasised her youthfulness to show how different she was to Catherine, Jane ensured that she appeared as different to Anne as night and day.

In the 19th century, Agnes Strickland pointed out that Jane Seymour was aware of how her affair with Henry affected the queen, but she went and married him anyway. It is a cynical view, but suggests that Jane may have been far more manipulative than thought.



It is possible that Jane was not the innocent apple of Henry's eye that we remember

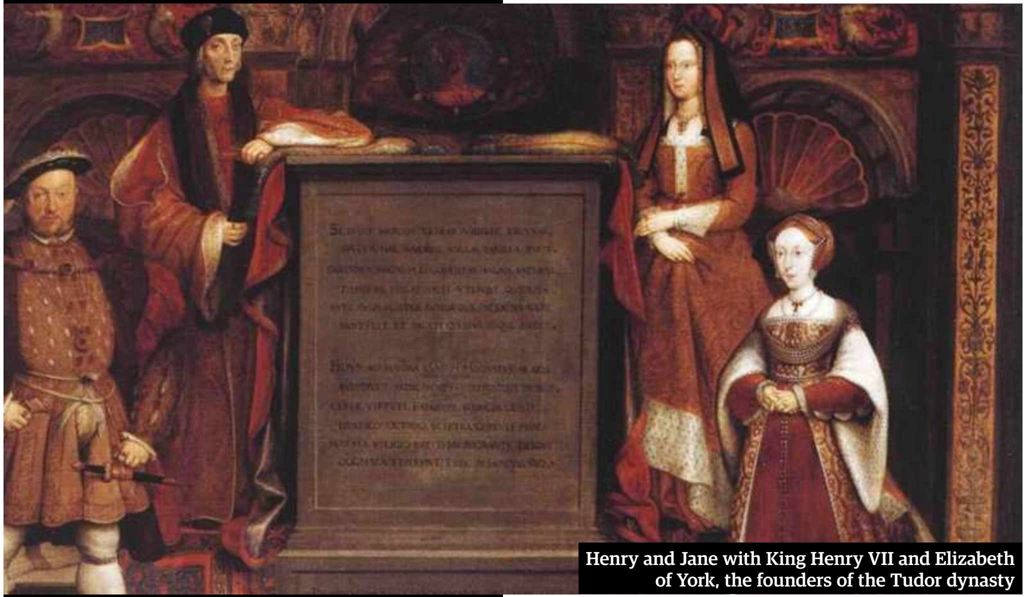
A TRUE TUDOR QUEEN

Jane's legacy as the mother of Henry's son lived on even after her death

Wanting to create a mural at the Palace of Whitehall, Henry commissioned Hans Holbein the Younger in 1536 to create a portrait, which featured himself, Jane and his parents, King Henry VII and Elizabeth of York. Completed in 1537, it was likely created with the anticipation that Jane was going to produce the next male in the Tudor dynasty. Unfortunately, the original painting was destroyed in a fire in 1698, but luckily, King Charles II had commissioned copy of it in 1667, which still survives.

Interestingly, this is not the only portrait to symbolise Jane's place in the Tudor dynasty. In 1545, Henry commissioned an unknown artist to create a dynastic portrait of his family. Standing to the far left is Princess Mary, his daughter with Catherine of Aragon, while to the far right stands Princess Elizabeth, Henry's daughter with Anne Boleyn. To Henry's immediate left is Prince Edward and to his right, his beloved queen, Jane Seymour.

It is clear to see Jane's importance from this portrait. By this point, she had been dead for eight years and Henry was married to his sixth and final wife, Catherine Parr. But it was Jane who had given Henry the son he had desired for years and ensured the continuation of the Tudors through the male line – and it was Jane he wanted to have pictured beside him.



Henry and Jane with King Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, the founders of the Tudor dynasty

he was originally courting Anne. However, the king was receiving considerable backlash for his relationship while his queen was on trial – leaving Jane upset and concerned.

Despite this, Henry was determined to be done with Anne once and for all. With trumped-up charges of adultery, incest and conspiracy to the kill the king, Anne's downfall came quickly. On 19 May 1536, Henry had Anne beheaded for high treason. The very next day, he became engaged to Jane.

On 30 May, a mere 11 days after Anne's execution, Henry married Jane, and she was declared queen five days later. To many it was a cold and callous move, but the king was never known for his patience. As Henry's third wife and England's new queen, Jane had a lot of expectation on her shoulders – if she failed, she could end up the same way as her ill-fated predecessor.

Determined to distance herself from the scandal of Anne Boleyn, Jane adopted the motto of 'Bound to Obey and Serve' as queen. The message was obvious: where Anne had been outspoken and fiery, Jane would be fair, quiet and obedient. She quickly brought English fashions, such as the gable hood, back to court to replace the French fashions that Anne introduced. Her household also became far more conservative than Anne's, something Jane made clear when she removed the flamboyant entertainments that Anne had loved.

Although she vowed to serve the king, Jane did attempt to influence him during the Pilgrimage of Grace, which began in October 1536. A deeply religious woman and a Catholic, Jane was troubled by the dissolution of the monasteries and feared that the Pilgrimage was God's retribution against the king. She asked the king to pardon those involved but he publicly rebuked her, callously reminding her of what had happened to the last queen who defied him.

> "JANE HAS THE DISTINCTION OF BEING THE ONLY ONE OF HENRY'S WIVES TO DIE AS A QUEEN"

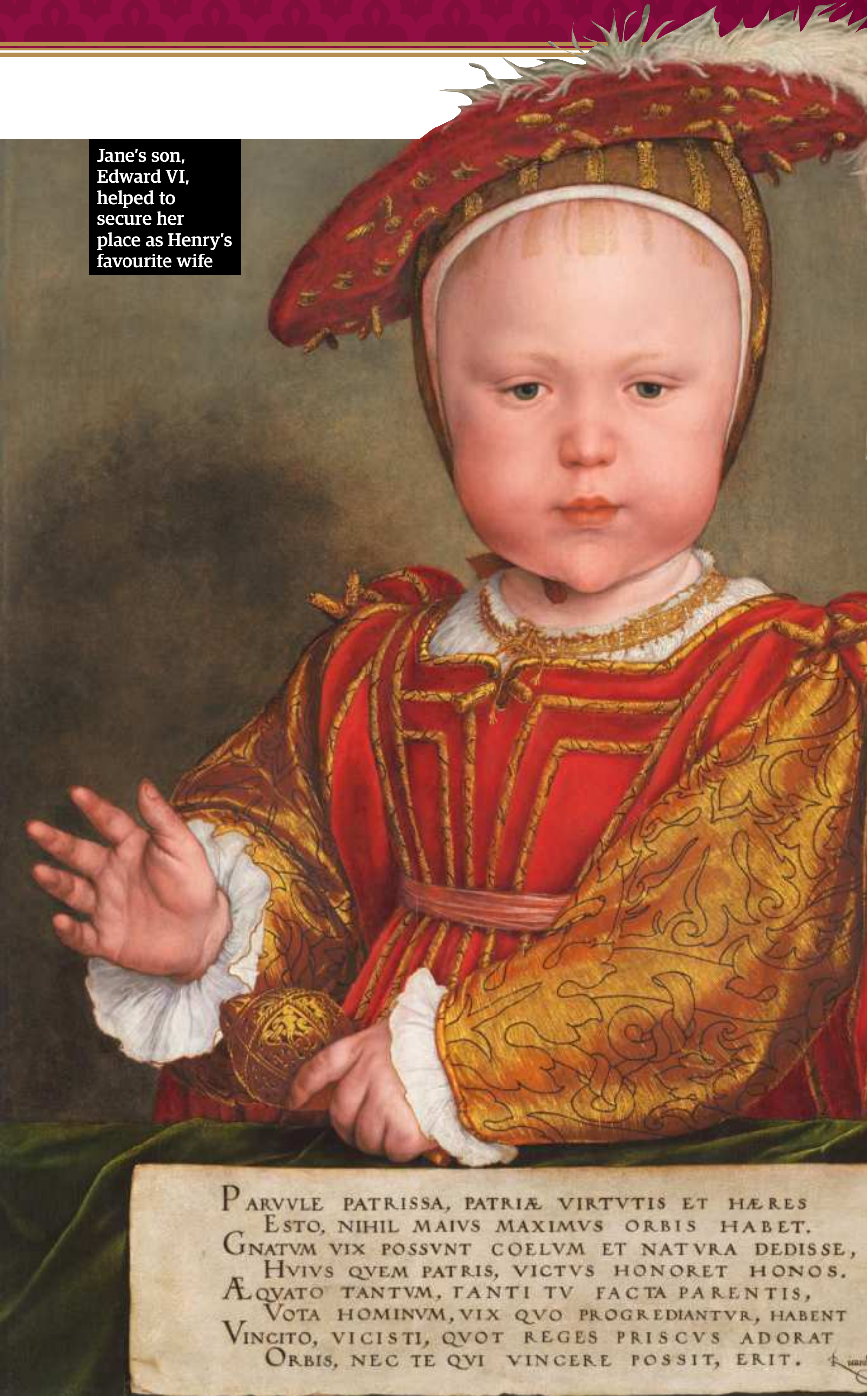
The experience taught Jane that to survive, she needed to remain meek and mild-mannered. She was also keenly aware how insecure her position as queen was, as she had not been given an official coronation. Henry claimed that he had postponed it because of an outbreak of plague, but it was most likely dependent on the condition that Jane provide him with the son that eluded him. After all, he had given Anne a lavish coronation, but had no male heir to show for it.

To make matters worse, Henry's illegitimate son, Henry FitzRoy, died two months after their wedding. There were rumours that Henry wanted to legitimise his son so that he could ascend to the throne. This made FitzRoy a safety net for the queen, giving her more time to conceive. But now he was dead, the race for a male heir was more desperate than ever, as the king was now 45 years old. A year into their marriage, it was announced that Jane was finally with child, to the delight of the king. Edward Hall, the famed Tudor chronicler, said that after the announcement, "various great fires were made in London, with a hogshead of wine at every fire for the poor people to drink as long as it lasted". He also wrote: "I pray Jesus, if it be his will, to send us a prince" – a sentiment that was probably echoed across the country.

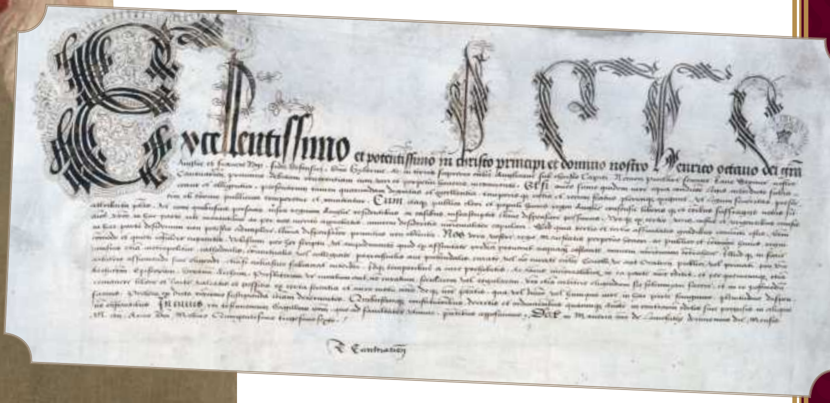
Little is known about Jane's pregnancy, although it is said Jane had a craving for quail, which Henry had imported from Calais especially for his queen. In September 1537, Jane went into confinement at Hampton Court Palace in preparation for the birth. She was praying that soon the son upon whom her future and that of the country's depended would arrive safely.

It is no secret that childbirth in Tudor England was dangerous, but Jane's labour was extremely difficult. It lasted for two days and three nights before she gave birth to her long-awaited son, Edward, on 12 October. She was physically exhausted, but Jane had succeeded where her two predecessors had failed. The Tudor dynasty had been secured, almost three decades into Henry's tumultuous reign.

A letter from Jane to Henry, announcing they were "delivered a prince", resurfaced in 2012. Of course, it was paramount the joyous news spread as quickly as possible. But despite her


PARVVLE PATRISSA, PATRIÆ VIRTVTIS ET HÆRES
ESTO, NIHIL MAIVS MAXIMVS ORBIS HABET.
GNATVM VIX POSSVNT COELVM ET NATVRA DEDISSE,
HVIVS QVEM PATRIS, VICTVS HONORET HONOS.
ÆQVATO TANTVM, TANTI TV FACTA PARENTIS,
VOTA HOMINVM, VIX QVO PROGREDIANTVR, HABENT
VINCITO, VICISTI, QVOT REGES PRISCVS ADORAT
ORBIS, NEC TE QVI VINCERE POSSIT, ERIT.

Jane's son, Edward VI, helped to secure her place as Henry's favourite wife


Excellentissimo et potentissimo in christo principi et domino nostro Henrico octavo dei gra

The dispensation for Henry and Jane's marriage, issued the same day as Anne Boleyn's execution

achievement, Jane was not able to enjoy her new-found security as the mother to the heir of the English throne, as she was unwell from her ordeal.

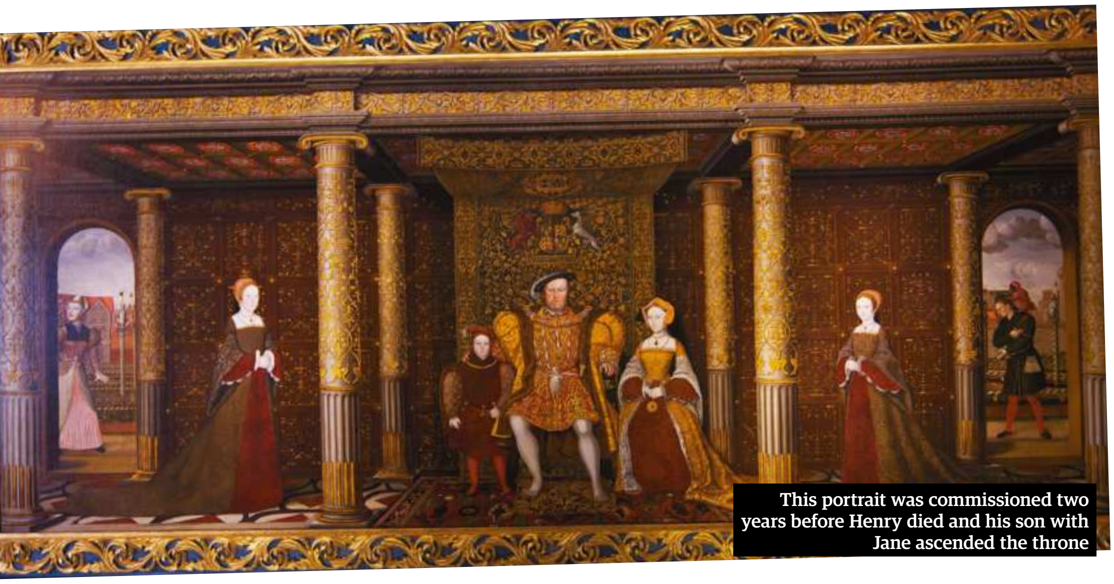
At first, it looked like the queen would rally. She recovered enough to witness some of the procession heading to her son's christening on 15 October. It proved to be a false hope, as Jane quickly worsened, most likely suffering from childbed fever. She became delirious and demanded sweets and wine, which some contemporaries blamed for her condition. On 24 October, Jane succumbed to her illness.

Jane's funeral was held a few weeks later, on 12 November. 29 ladies took part in Jane's funeral procession, and as it was traditional for each mourner to represent a year of the deceased's life, it is assumed that Jane was only 29 years old when she died.

Her stepdaughter Mary acted as chief mourner at the funeral. After the Pilgrimage incident, Jane did not attempt to involve herself with Henry's affairs, but she was successful in getting the king to reconcile with his daughter. The fact Mary was also named as godmother to Prince Edward is a further testament to this.

Jane has the distinction of being the only one of Henry's wives to die as a queen, and therefore receive a royal funeral at Windsor. The king was left devastated by Jane's death and he grieved for three months, wearing only black clothing. After her death he began to pile on a significant amount of weight, something he had struggled with since his jousting accident the previous year.

Henry was buried next to Jane following his own death in 1547, per his request. For this reason, it is commonly assumed that Jane was Henry's favourite wife, as she had given him the male heir he had always wanted. Also, the gap of three years between Jane's death and Henry's remarriage to Anne of Cleves was the longest break he had between wives, another hint as to how heartbroken he was by her death. Jane's reign as queen may have been tragically brief, but her importance in history as the woman who finally gave Henry VIII the male heir he needed has ensured her legacy will never be forgotten.


This portrait was commissioned two years before Henry died and his son with Jane ascended the throne

© Mary Evans; Alamy; Getty; WIKI

THE LEAST LOVED BRIDE

Henry VIII's fourth marriage proved to be his shortest, with the king taking an immediate dislike to his German-born bride, Anne of Cleves

Written by Elizabeth Norton

Few English queens enjoyed a shorter tenure in the role than Anne of Cleves, a woman who was unlucky enough to find herself as Henry VIII's fourth wife. The death of his third wife, Jane Seymour, in childbirth in October 1537 created a vacancy that Henry VIII wanted quickly filled. He was, at first, interested in a French bride, before seeking a wife among the family of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. Yet, when the emperor and the French king made peace in 1539, England was left dangerously exposed. Henry's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, suggested that the king look further afield.

In the 16th century, Germany was made up of a series of semi-independent principalities and duchies, under the nominal control of the Holy Roman Emperor. While the Emperor, Charles V, was a committed Catholic, by the 1530s many of the German princes had come under the influence of Martin Luther and other early Protestant reformers. To protect their position, a Protestant defensive league – known as the Schmalkaldic League – was created in February 1531, led by Philip, Landgrave of Hesse and John Frederick, Duke of Saxony. The Duchy of Cleves remained Catholic and was not a member of the League, but John Frederick was married to the eldest sister of the Duke of Cleves. His wife had two younger sisters: Anne and Amelia. By January 1539, they were the best matches that the League could offer.

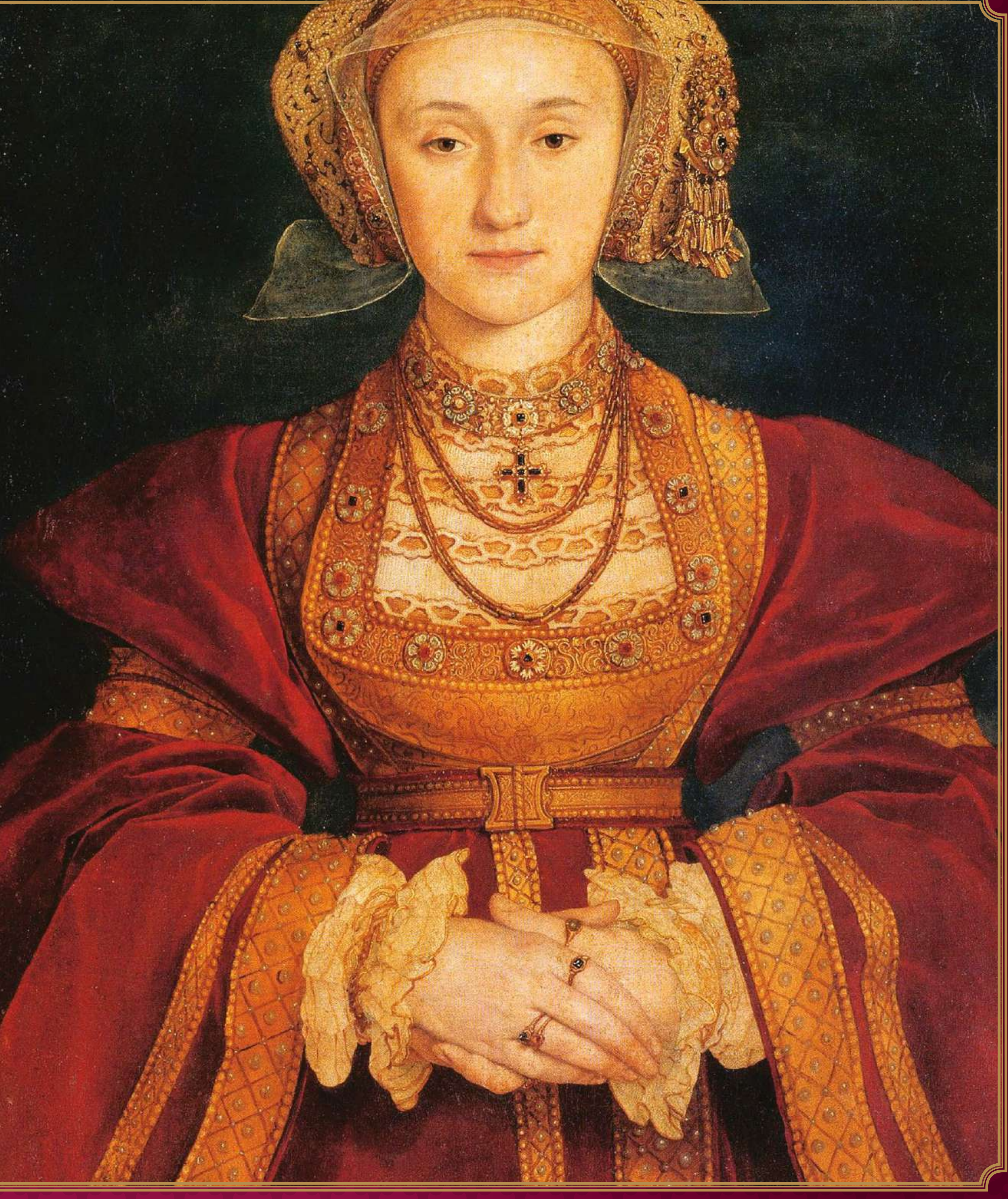
Anne of Cleves was 23 years old, and had been strictly raised by her conservative mother. She was a very suitable match for Henry, being closely related to both the King of France and the Holy Roman Emperor. Personally, however, the English ambassadors had concerns. She knew no other language than German and had no knowledge of music or dancing – qualities Henry esteemed in a woman. Nonetheless, as the ambassadors noted, "Her wit is so good, that no doubt she will in a short space learn the English tongue."

Henry sent his court painter, Hans Holbein, to paint both sisters and was pleased with Anne's. All reports made of her beauty were positive, although the English ambassadors lamented it was difficult to get a clear view of the sisters due to the "monstrous habits" they wore.

By the end of September 1539, a marriage treaty had been agreed and the princess set out for England, arriving at English-held Calais on 11 December. While waiting for the weather to clear to allow her to sail, Anne impressed those she met with her amiability. On one occasion, she asked her attendants to teach her a card game that Henry liked so they could have an interest in common. She also dined with the Englishmen sent to greet her in Calais in order to learn more about English customs. She was, however, already homesick, eagerly opening letters that arrived for news of her former home.

After being forced to spend a quiet Christmas at Calais, Anne was finally able to sail on 27 December, arriving at Deal in Kent that day. There she was met by Henry's brother-in-law, the Duke of Suffolk. After a day of rest at Dover Castle on 28 December, Anne once again showed her agreeable nature, consenting to travel on towards London on 29 December, in spite of the fact that 'the day was foul and windy with much hail'. She arrived at Rochester on New Year's Eve.

Henry VIII had known all three of his previous wives before marriage. Although he had not met Anne, with



"WHILE ANNE WAS, AT FIRST, OBLIVIOUS TO HENRY'S DISLIKE OF HER, CROMWELL WAS ALL TOO AWARE"

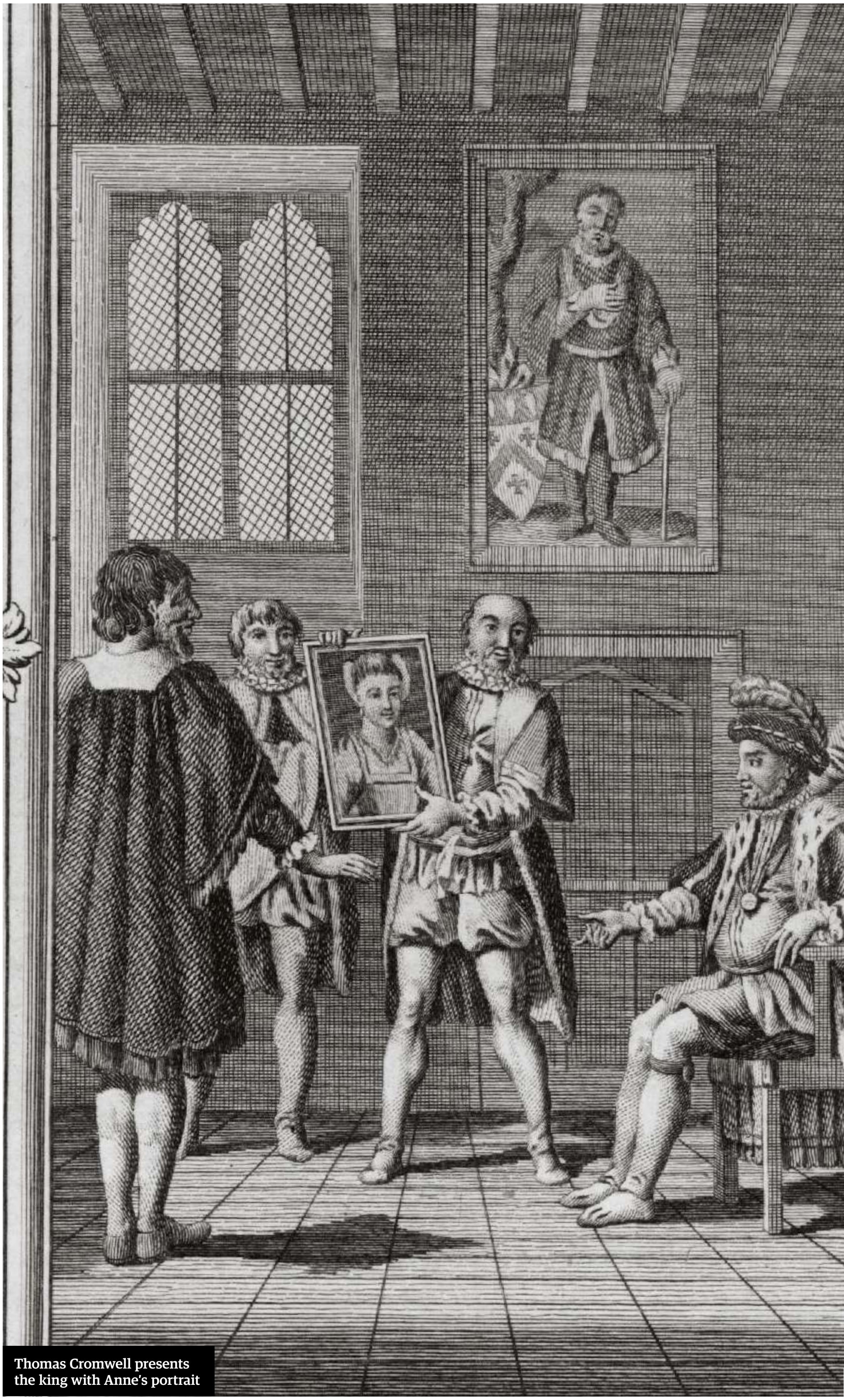
the help of her portrait and the favourable reports of her appearance and demeanour, he already appeared in love with her to those who saw him at court. After the long delay at Calais, he was anxious to meet her and, on New Year's Day, he could contain himself no more. Disguising himself as a messenger, Henry set out with only a few companions for Rochester, in order to "nourish love" (as he confessed) with his bride.

The idea of a king visiting his new bride in secret was firmly rooted in ideals of courtly love, with the woman expected to recognise her suitor thanks to the love that already existed between them. Anne, however, had no background in courtly love and had already encountered an overwhelming number of new faces since she had left Cleves. She was standing at a window in her chamber, watching a bull baiting in the courtyard below, when the 'messenger' was ushered into her presence.

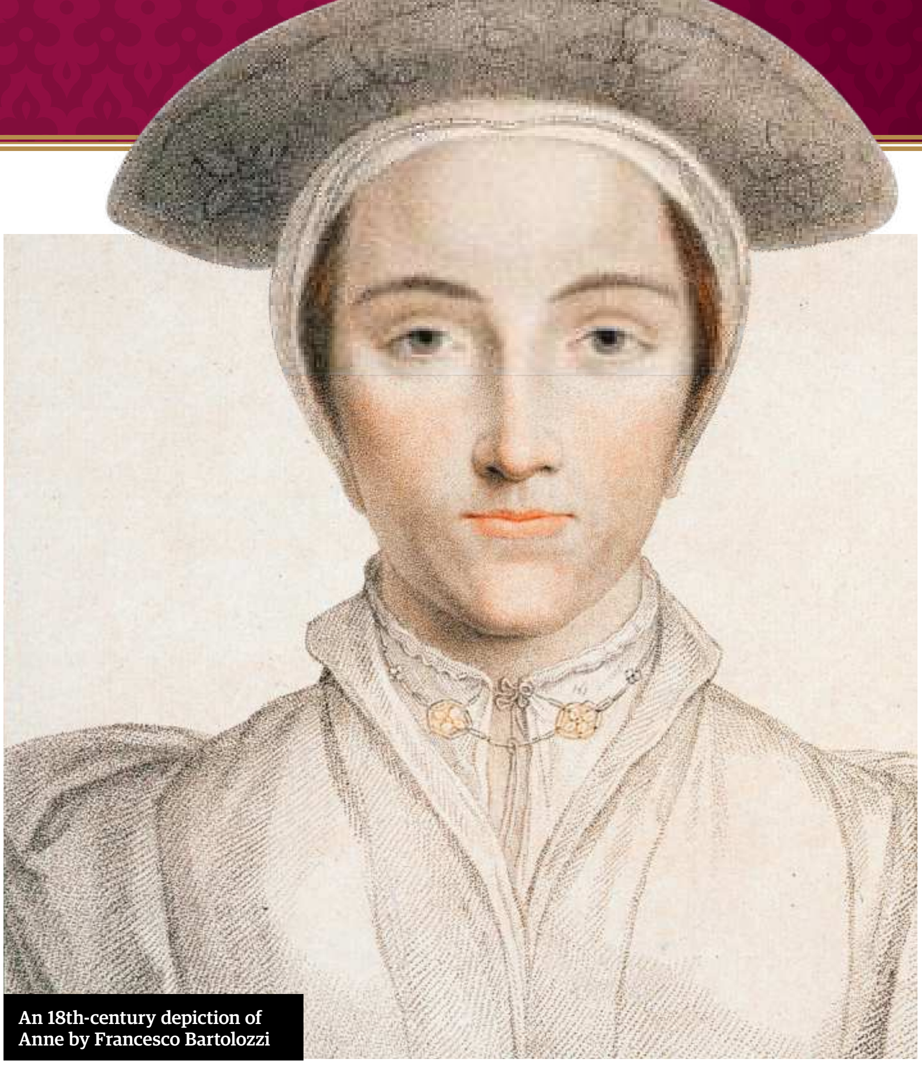
Perhaps annoyed at the intrusion, Anne ignored her middle-aged and overweight visitor, continuing to look out the window. Even when he attempted to kiss her, she continued to look away, forcing the king to finally admit defeat and leave the room. He re-entered, dressed in a cloak of purple velvet, which was the signal for everyone assembled to recognise him. As those around her fell to their knees, Anne realised her catastrophic mistake and curtseyed to the king, who greeted her before taking her into another chamber where they talked through interpreters.

Henry was courteous to his new bride, but the damage had already been well and truly done. He hurried away from Rochester the next day, forgetting to give Anne her New Year's gift of rich furs. Although he probably never did complain that he had been sent a "Flanders Mare" instead of a woman, his expression on first meeting Anne said much. In the boat back to Greenwich, Henry complained to his friend, Sir Anthony Browne, that, "I see nothing in this woman as men report of her; and I marvel that wise men would make such report as they had done."

No one ever complained that Holbein's likeness of Anne was a bad one, although the French ambassador did comment she looked older than expected and dressed badly. It may be that Anne's dismissive reaction to Henry when he



Thomas Cromwell presents the king with Anne's portrait



An 18th-century depiction of Anne by Francesco Bartolozzi

first arrived was enough to shatter his illusions of love. When Cromwell asked how the meeting had gone, Henry replied she was "nothing so well as she was spoken of" and that he wished she had not come to England. For fear of angering Anne's brother and driving him into an alliance with the Emperor, however, Henry was forced to proceed with Anne's official welcome to Greenwich on 3 January 1540.

After complaining to Cromwell that, "If it were not to satisfy the world and my realm I would not do that I must do this day for none Earthly thing," Henry entered the chapel at Greenwich Palace on 6 January to solemnise his fourth wedding. Anne, who accepted a ring from Henry engraved with "God send me well to keep", was probably still oblivious to the king's reaction to her.

The couple were ceremonially put to bed together that night, where Henry (as he confessed to Cromwell the next day) "felt her belly and her breasts," which "struck me so to the heart when I felt them that I had neither will nor courage to proceed further in other matters." Anne, who seems to have received little to no education on just what being a wife entailed, may not have

A WARREN OF HONOURABLE LADIES

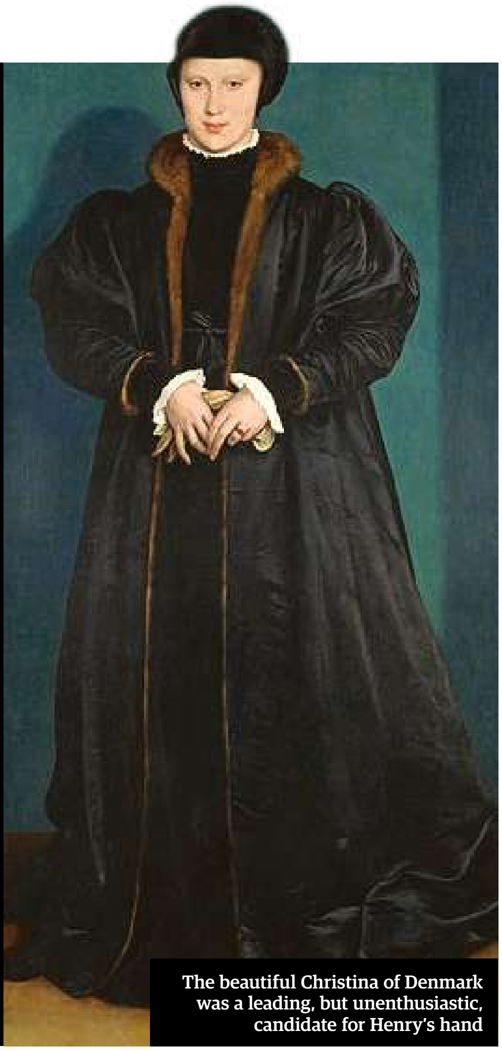
Anne of Cleves was not Henry VIII's first choice of bride

Jane Seymour's death left Henry VIII without an obvious candidate for a fourth wife. Thankfully, he had a wealth of foreign women to choose from, with the French king, Francis I, assuring him that his realm was a "warren of honourable ladies".

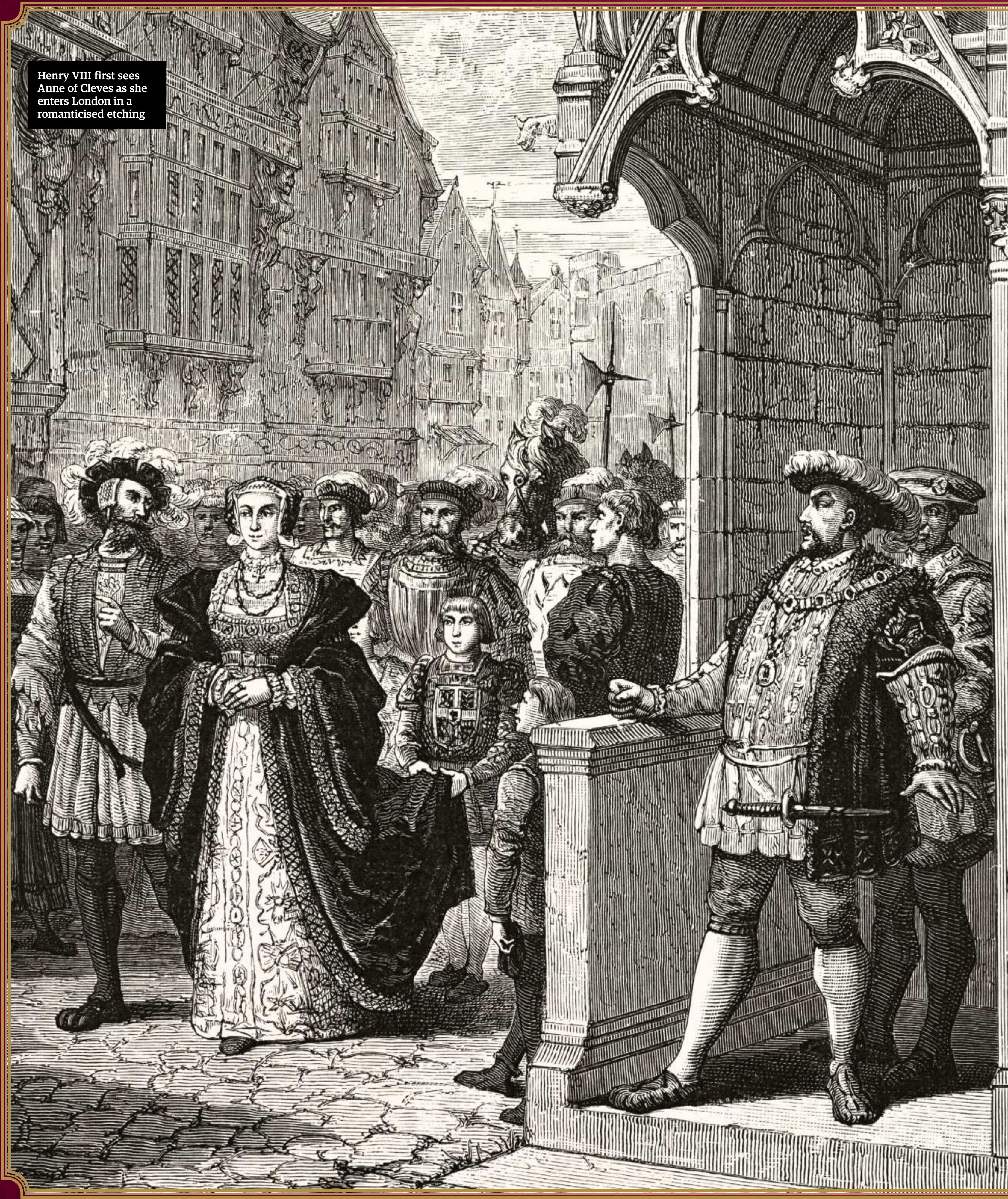
Henry's first choice was the statuesque French noblewoman Marie de Guise. Unfortunately, she was already betrothed to Henry's nephew, James V of Scotland. This did not prevent the uncle from making an attempt at her hand, with the English king declaring that, "he was big in person and had need of a big wife." When her engagement proved unbreakable, he considered her two sisters, ignoring the fact that one was promised to a convent.

In July 1538, he requested that three French candidates be brought to Calais to allow him to make his choice personally. While this appears a reasonable request, to the French, it was scandalous, with Francis complaining that the women were not horses to be made to promenade on show. When Henry persisted, the French ambassador sarcastically asked whether he also wanted to try out the ladies before he chose, causing the king to blush.

By early 1538, Henry had opened negotiations to take a bride from the Holy Roman Empire. Christina of Denmark was Charles V's niece and, although still a teenager, she was already a widow. She was reportedly beautiful, though lukewarm in her enthusiasm for the match. Allegedly, on hearing of Henry's interest, she replied that, "she had but one head, if she had two, one should be at his Majesty's service." As the great-niece of Catherine of Aragon, Christina knew about his fearsome reputation. She cannot have been displeased, therefore, when negotiations were finally broken off in 1539 when peace was made between the empire and France.



The beautiful Christina of Denmark was a leading, but unenthusiastic, candidate for Henry's hand



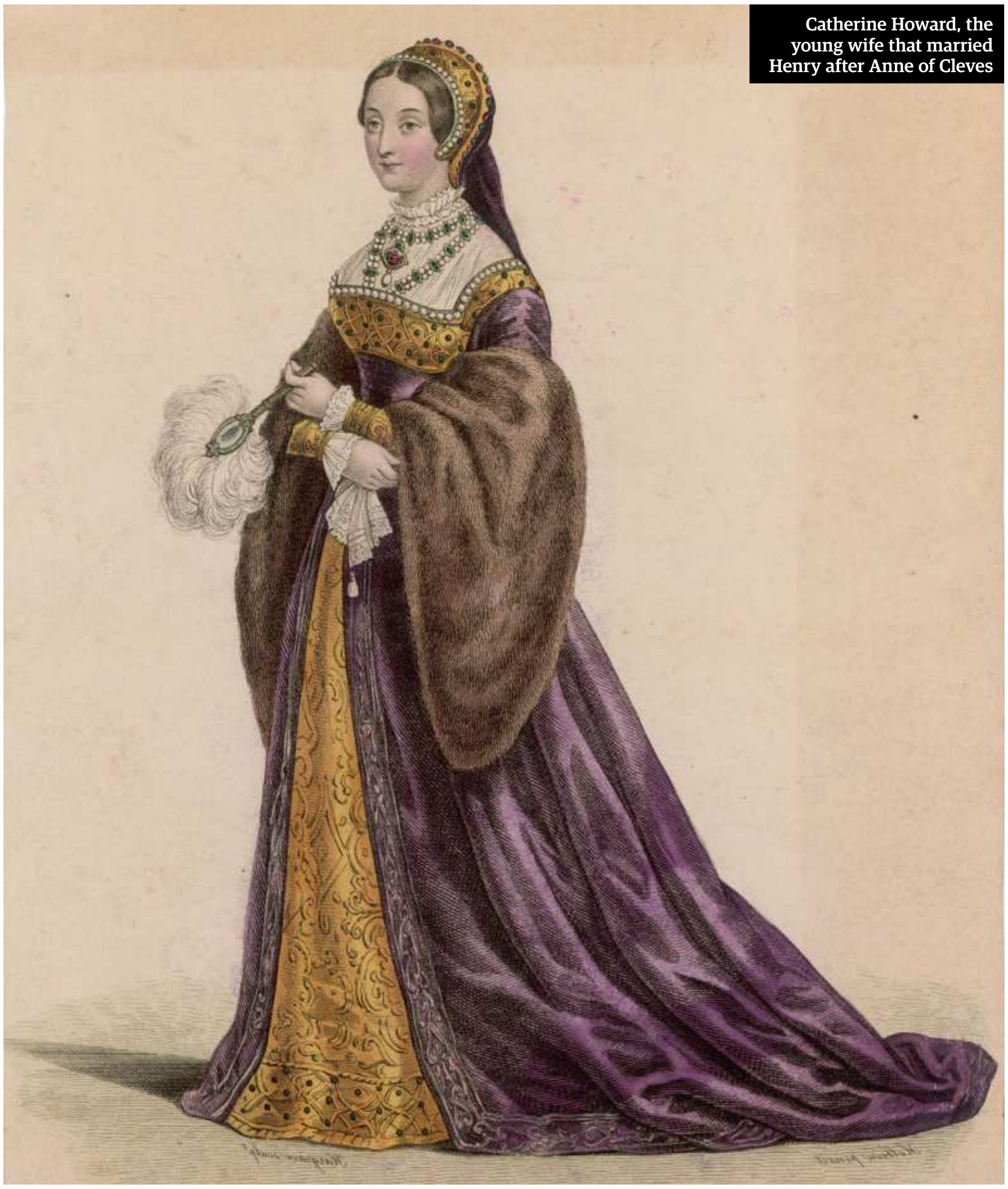
Henry VIII first sees Anne of Cleves as she enters London in a romanticised etching realised that more was expected of her on her wedding night.

The couple continued to go to bed together in the weeks after their wedding but, as Anne recalled to her ladies, "When he comes to bed he kisses me, and taketh me by the hand, and biddeth me, Good night, sweetheart: and in the morning kisses me, and biddeth me, Farewell, darling." She then asked her attendants innocently, "Is this not enough?" Eventually Henry abandoned even the pretence of sharing a bed with her.

While at first Anne was oblivious to Henry's dislike of her, Cromwell was all too aware. As the architect of the marriage, he had a vested interest in ensuring its success and desperately enjoined the queen's chamberlain, the Earl of Rutland, to find some way to make her more pleasing towards the king. When this had no success, the minister called Rutland and the rest of Anne's council to him and, "Required them to counsel their mistress to use all pleasantries," towards her husband. This may have led Anne to abandon her heavy, unfashionable German clothes, instead appearing at court in a French hood, which daringly displayed the wearer's hair and had been popularised in England by Henry's second wife, Anne Boleyn. This did little to change the king's opinion of his bride and, when Anne made her official entry to London on 4 February, the two travelled in separate barges.

Henry had initially been attracted to Anne for the political alliance with her brother. Yet, in the early months of 1540, this also began to become undesirable. William of Cleves had inherited the German duchy of Guelders some years before, which gave Cleves important access to the coast for the first time. His acquisition of the duchy was, however, challenged by the emperor, who claimed it as his. By early 1540, it was clear that the matter of Guelders was going to lead to war, something that risked dragging England into a foreign war on behalf of Cleves.

As the political situation continued to deteriorate, the benefits of an alliance with Cleves entirely disappeared. Cromwell was the first to suffer, with the minister arrested on 10 June 1540. Although he was charged with treason rather than any specific misconduct concerning the Cleves marriage, it was clear that it was Henry's marriage that had led to the sudden disfavour in which the minister found himself. He was soon executed.


Catherine Howard, the young wife that married Henry after Anne of Cleves

In late June 1540 Anne was abruptly dismissed from court and sent to Richmond Palace by her husband. While these orders were ostensibly to keep her safe from the plague in London, it is clear that Anne knew that this was nothing more than a pretext. On 26 June, she summoned her brother's ambassador, Carl Harst, to her presence, to complain of her treatment. While Harst sought to reassure her that Richmond was not very far from court, he was surprised when the queen told him that she knew what had happened to Henry's divorced first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and that there were rumours that Henry intended to discard her for a lady-in-waiting. In this, she was to be proved entirely correct.

In the early hours of 6 July 1540, Anne was awoken by a messenger from court. He informed her that the king had doubts about the validity of her marriage and that he required her consent for the matter to be considered in a church court. Anne immediately summoned Harst, and the pair sat together in her apartments for some time while she digested the news.

Sometime after four in the morning, Anne summoned her chancellor, Lord Rutland, who noted that she seemed to take the matter "heavily". The queen, who appears to have feared sharing the fate of Henry's earlier wives – particularly that suffered by Anne Boleyn – meekly acquiesced to the king's demands, although Harst was furious, returning at once to court to berate the king's ministers. While he was away, Anne was interrogated by Thomas Audeley, Henry's lord chancellor, and Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, as to the lack of consummation of her marriage, although she refused to speak on the matter.

As soon as Anne's consent was obtained, a convocation of the leading clergy was summoned to Westminster. On 7 July, the clergymen unanimously agreed that, "The king and Anne of Cleves were nowise bound by the marriage solemnised between them," due to a childhood betrothal of Anne's, the lack of consummation and Henry's failure to consent to the marriage.

Anne was probably unaware that the matter would be heard so quickly, and was shocked when word was sent to her later on that day. While the English commissioners informed the king that she took the news well and "without

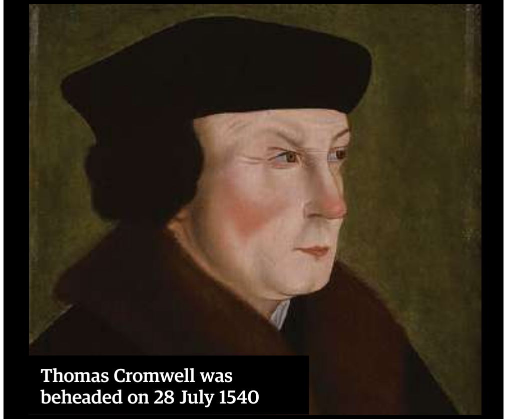
THE EHD OF CROMWELL

Henry VIII's chief minister was blamed for the failure of the king's fourth marriage

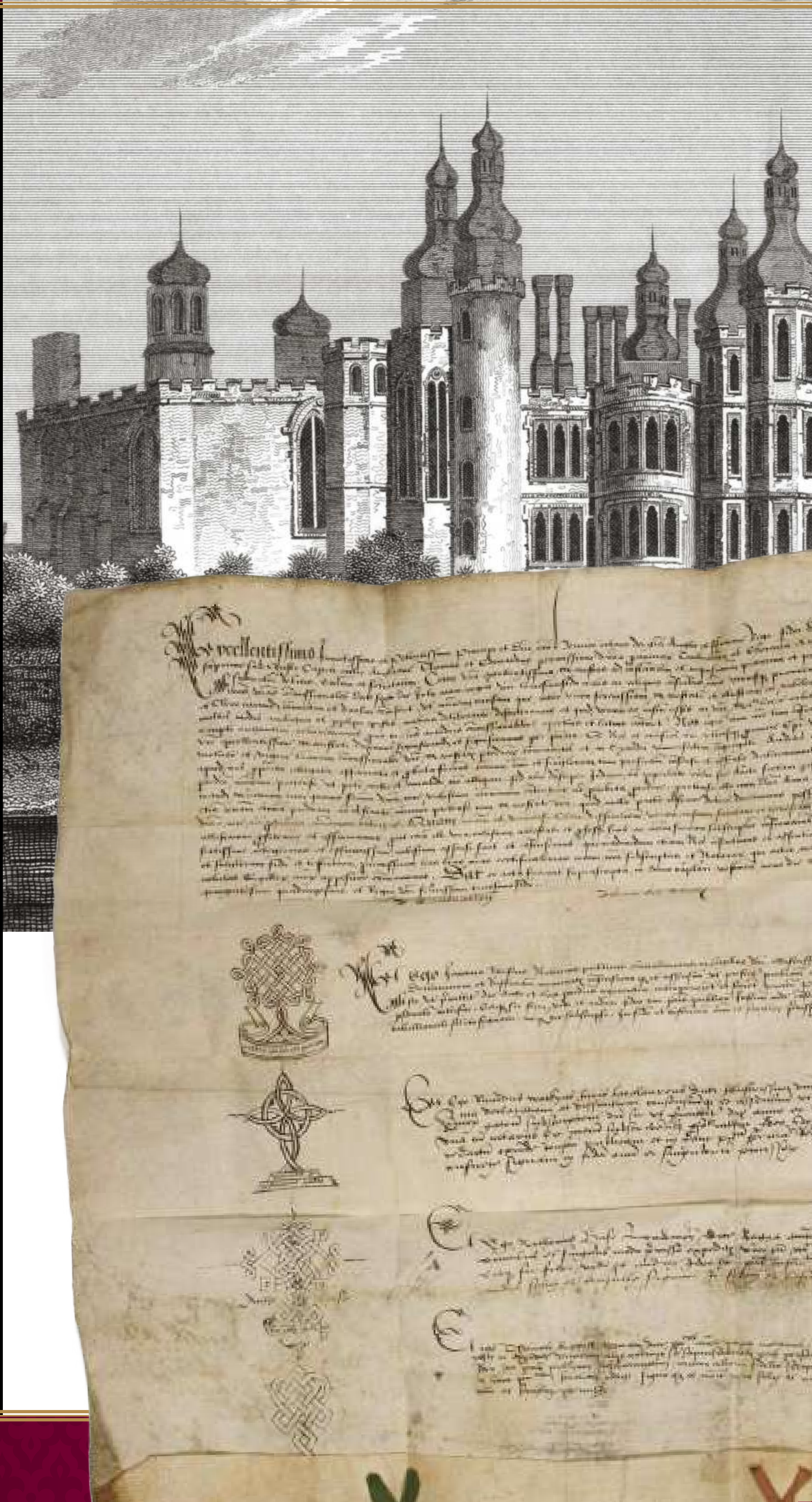
Thomas Cromwell, the son of a Putney blacksmith, used his intelligence and political skills to rise at court, becoming the king's chief minister in the early 1530s. While there is some debate over the nature of his religious beliefs, it is clear that Cromwell was interested in building links with the growing Protestant movement. He suggested the marriage alliance with the Schmalkaldic League and sent his own ambassador, Christopher Mont, to negotiate the match. Initially pleased with his success, Cromwell was soon horrified to discover the extent of the king's dislike of his bride. It would later be recalled by the minister's rival on the council, Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, that, "the marriage only lasted one night and ruined Cromwell."

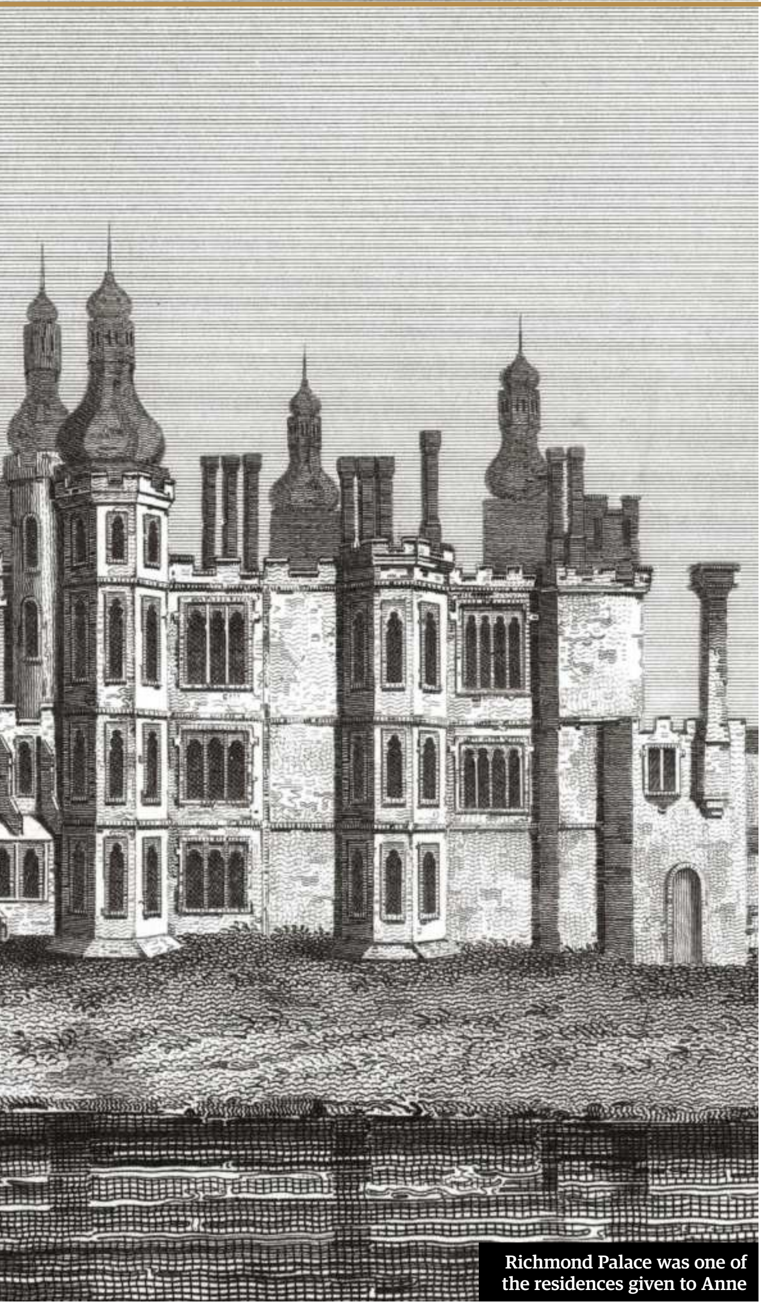
The end for Cromwell came sooner than he can have expected. On 10 June 1540, as he entered the council chamber, he found his fellow councillors seated, having begun the session without him. On commenting, "You were in a great hurry, gentleman," he went to take his usual seat. The Duke of Norfolk, with whom he had recently quarrelled, then called out, "Cromwell, do not sit there; that is no place for thee. Traitors do not sit amongst gentlemen." In spite of his protestations that he was no traitor, Cromwell was promptly arrested and taken to the Tower of London.

Even in the Tower, Cromwell had hopes for his life and agreed to provide all the information he could on the king's marriage and possible grounds for divorce. While this proved useful to Henry, it was not enough to save the minister.

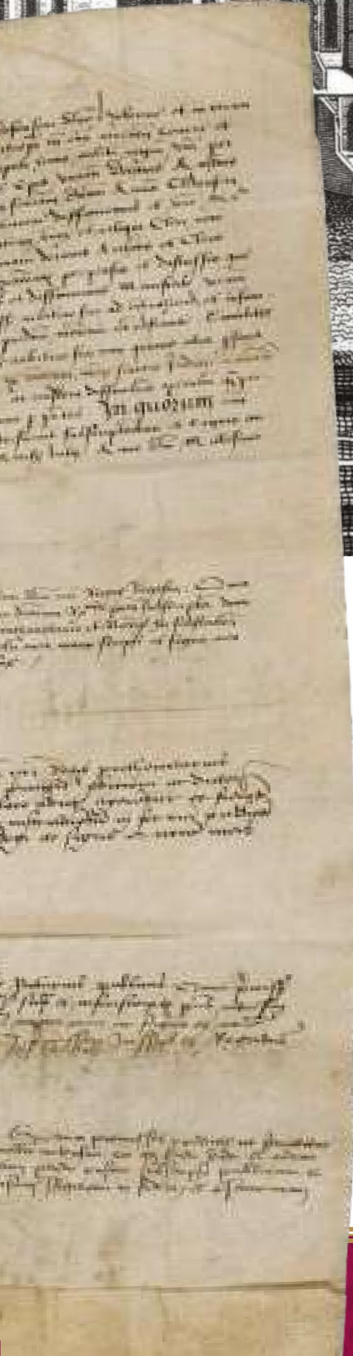


Thomas Cromwell was beheaded on 28 July 1540





Richmond Palace was one of the residences given to Anne



The nullification of Henry VIII's marriage with Anne of Cleves, which was agreed by both parties a mere six months after the initial marriage

"SURPRISINGLY, AFTER THE END OF THEIR MARRIAGE, ANNE SEEMS TO HAVE GOT ON WELL WITH HENRY"

alteration of countenance," Carl Harst reported that she cried and screamed, complaining that she had given herself to one man and that they could simply never divorce until the bitter death.

On hearing, however, that she would receive favourable treatment in return for her consent to the annulment, she calmed herself, agreeing to write to the king to confirm that "the pretended matrimony between us is void and of none effect," and accepting the title of the king's 'sister', giving her precedence over every woman in England, save any future queen and the king's two daughters. She also received Richmond and Bletchingley Palaces as her residences and a generous pension. Shortly afterwards, she sent her wedding ring to Henry, asking that, "it might be broken in pieces as a thing which she knew of no force or value."

The abrupt end to Henry's fourth marriage was met with incredulity and ridicule across Europe. The Emperor Charles V appeared perplexed on hearing the news, merely asking what the doubts over the marriage were. The king of France was even more confused, asking, when he was informed, "What, with the matrimony made with the queen that now is?" On being informed that this was indeed the case, he merely sighed and became quiet.

John Frederick of Saxony was furious, and the Schmalkaldic League broke off relations with England. While Anne's sister, the Electress of Saxony, continued to refer to her sister as queen of England, John Frederick would later refuse to have any dealings with Henry, whom he referred to as that "crazy man". Anne initially believed her brother would "slay her" for the dishonour that she had brought to the family if she returned to Cleves, but he took the news relatively well, saying privately he was glad, "his sister had sped no worse."

Henry VIII wasted no time in replacing Anne, marrying Catherine Howard - one of the former queen's maids, on 28 July 1540. Surprisingly, after the end of their marriage, Anne seems to have got on well with Henry, with the pair dining together on occasion. She was also friendly with Catherine Howard, with whom she danced at court at New Year 1541.

Anne enjoyed her independence, appearing (as the French ambassador noted) "as joyous as ever, and wears new dresses every day." During Henry's lifetime, she was able to live in considerable comfort, with the king topping up her pension when required. She remained a part of the English royal family for close to a decade after her former husband's death in January 1547, riding in the same carriage as Princess Elizabeth at Mary I's coronation in 1553.

Anne of Cleves was to be the last survivor of Henry VIII's six wives, dying at Chelsea on 15 July 1557 at the age of only 41, ten years after her husband's death. Although wedded to Henry for only six months, her life was entirely defined by her relationship to England's most married monarch, and she never again left the country of which she had been, so briefly, queen consort.

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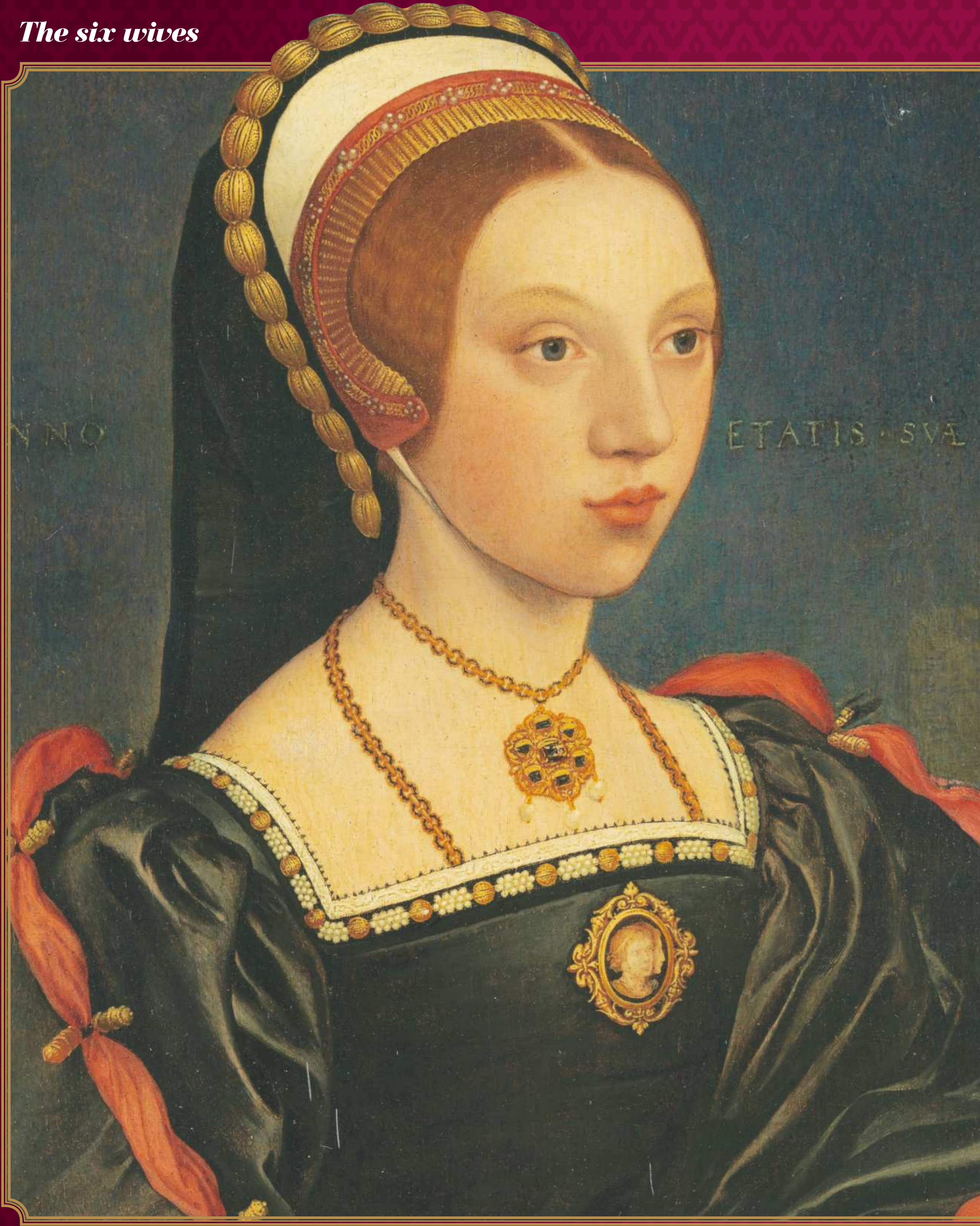
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BETRAYED AND BEHEADED

She's been described as dim-witted, naïve and promiscuous, but was Henry VIII's fifth wife guilty of her crimes or a victim of a far darker one?

Words Alicea Francis

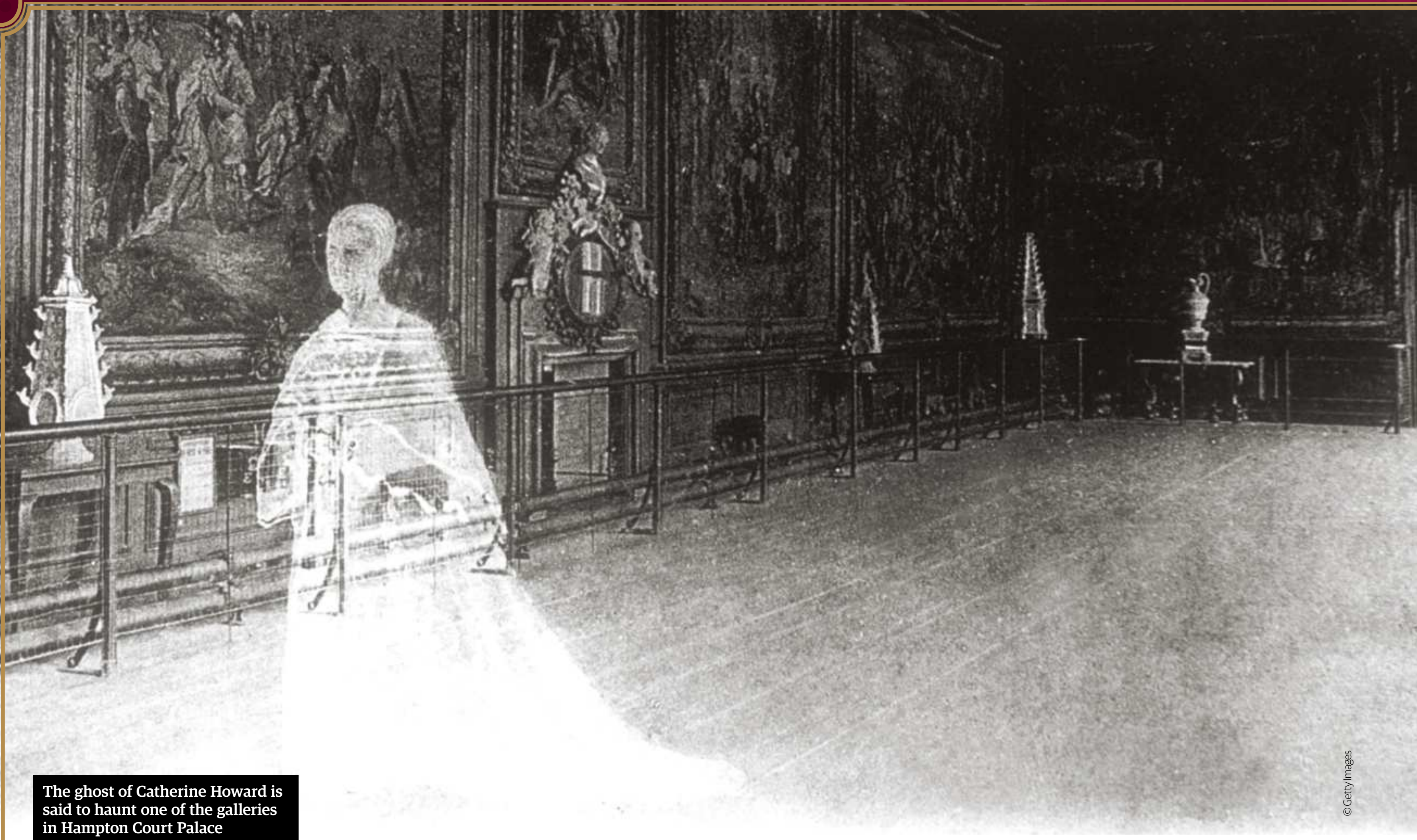
They say that there is one corridor in Hampton Court Palace where the air turns cold. Listen carefully, they say, and you will hear the screams of a young woman, or perhaps glimpse her running through what is now known as the Haunted Gallery. It is, so the story goes, the ghost of Catherine Howard – Henry VIII's ill-fated fifth wife, who was beheaded for high treason after her debauched sexual past was revealed. She has since often been painted at worst a scheming adulteress, at best a silly little girl. Who, after all, would dare to be disloyal to a king infamous for lopping off heads at the earliest opportunity? Surely there is more to this twisted tale than meets the eye?

Catherine was born into one of the most powerful families in Tudor England, but this did not secure her a privileged upbringing. Her father, Edmund Howard, was a younger son of the 2nd Duke of Norfolk, and it was his eldest brother, Thomas, who inherited the wealth and title. Edmund, meanwhile, relied on handouts to support his growing family. When his first wife died, he was left with 11 children to fend for, and quickly married a wealthy widow. In 1531, his niece, Anne Boleyn, appointed him comptroller of Calais, and he and his new wife departed for the Continent. Edmund left his younger children in the care of family members – Catherine, who was perhaps eight or nine years old, was sent to live with her step-grandmother, the dowager duchess of Norfolk.

The dowager duchess had many young wards, who lived together in her home at Horsham. There, they received an education of sorts, but were largely left to their own devices. Drinking and debauchery were rife, with the male members of the household often taking advantage of their female cohabitees. When Catherine was in her early teens, she was allegedly molested by her music teacher Henry Mannox, who, she would later claim, "touched the secret parts" of her body without permission. When the dowager duchess discovered the pair in a compromising position, she "gave straight charge both to her and Mannox that they should never be alone together" and issued Catherine "two or three blows" around the head. This was an age when the issue of consent was yet to be called into question – the blame for this indiscretion lay clearly at Catherine's feet.

They were still seeing each other in 1538 when Mary Lascelles arrived as a nursemaid. She was appalled when she heard that Catherine was having an affair with a servant. When Mary warned Mannox of the danger he was in, he replied: "I have had her by the c**t and she hath said to me that I shall have her maiden-head though it be painful to her, not doubting that I will be good to her hereafter." When Catherine heard what he had said, she flew into a rage, declaring: "I will never be nought with you and able to marry me ye be not." She called off the relationship immediately.

Shortly after, Catherine was moved to the dowager duchess' household at Lambeth. By



The ghost of Catherine Howard is said to haunt one of the galleries in Hampton Court Palace

© Getty Images

this time, Catherine had blossomed into an attractive and charming young woman. Less flattering adjectives like 'promiscuous', 'giggly' and 'dim-witted' have also been bandied around by various biographers. She and the other girls of the household slept together in a room known as the maidens' chamber, the key to which often fell into the hands of the other sex. Night-time visitors would bring the girls wine, strawberries and other treats that they had stolen from the kitchens, in return for 'entertainment'.

One of these visitors was Francis Derehem, the dowager duchess' secretary. He took a shine to 15-year-old Catherine, and their affair went beyond flirtation. When the bed hangings were pulled shut, the noises that came from within made it explicit to everyone in the room what they were up to. But it appeared, at least, that Dereham was sincere in his pursuit of Catherine, as they soon began referring to one another as husband and wife, and reportedly signed a pre-contract of marriage. Their happiness was interrupted, however, when in 1539, Mannox caught wind of the affair, and in a fit of jealousy, wrote a letter to the dowager duchess advising her to go the maidens' chamber after dark. Dereham was discovered was sent away to Ireland as punishment. Catherine was devastated.

It wasn't long before she too was sent away, but her new home would be far grander than Dereham's. Her uncle Thomas Howard – now the 3rd Duke of Norfolk – found her a place at Hampton Court Palace as a lady-in-waiting to the king's new wife, Anne of Cleves. It was everything Catherine had dreamed of – alive with music, dancing and banquets… not to mention eligible young men. But it was the obese and ageing monarch who would eventually claim her heart.

"In early 1541, Henry suffered a bout of depression, and shut himself off from Catherine"

Following the scandal involving the Duke's niece Anne Boleyn, the Howards had fallen from favour, and he was desperate to restore his power. Conveniently for him, Henry had been disappointed when, on New Year's Day 1540, Anne of Cleves had arrived in England looking far from the fair maiden he had seen in portraits. Several months on, the marriage had yet to be consummated and the duke saw an opportunity to use Catherine as a pawn in his ambitious game. Telling his niece exactly how to behave and dress, the teenager soon caught the 49-year-old sovereign's eye, and within months he was utterly smitten.

Henry's marriage to Anne of Cleves was annulled on 9 July 1540 on the grounds of non-consummation, and he married Catherine just over two weeks later on 28 July. For a while, it seemed that the king – who for years had been suffering from ill health – was rejuvenated. He embarked on a lavish spending spree to celebrate his marriage, ordering the refurbishment of Whitehall Palace and gifting his bride luxurious textiles, jewels and land. She adopted a new motto, which she had embroidered on her sleeves: "Non autre volonte que la sienne," meaning "no other wish but his." It was a foreboding sign of what was to come.

No plans were made for a coronation. It is assumed that Henry was waiting for news of a pregnancy – a spare for his heir. But the news never came. Dispelling the rumours, the king's physician insisted that it was not a result of impotency, as he had reported having "pollutiones nocturnas" while with Anne of Cleves – what we'd now call wet dreams. In early 1541, Henry suffered a bout of depression, and shut himself off from Catherine. It's said that during this time she began her affair with courtier Thomas Culpeper.

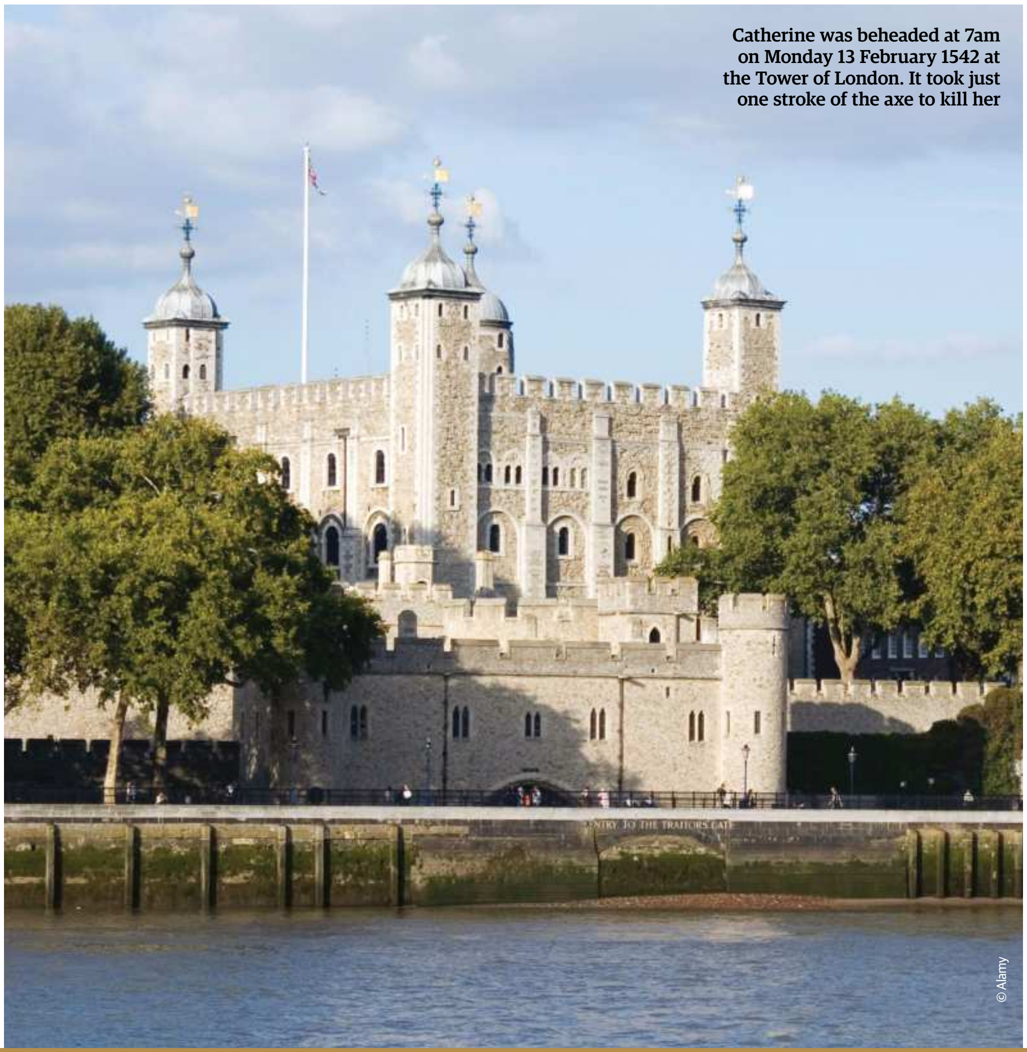
Culpeper was one of the monarch's favourites. As a gentleman to the king's privy chamber, he had intimate access to Henry's life, helping him to dress and even sleeping in his bedchamber. He has been described as a "beautiful youth", but with a dark past. In 1539, he was accused of raping a park-keeper's wife and murdering a villager who had tried to defend her. It is this history that has cast some doubt upon the accusations that would soon surround Culpeper and Queen Catherine.

If the rumours are to be believed, Catherine began meeting with Culpeper in private, with one of her older ladies-in-waiting – Lady Rochford – facilitating the meetings. When Henry and Catherine set off on their annual Great Progress to the north in June 1541, Culpeper went with them, and it's believed that the lovers had many an opportunity to misbehave en route. It was that summer that Catherine supposedly wrote the infamous love letter: "Master Coulpeper… I never longed so muche for [a] thynge as I do to se you and to speke wyth you, the wyche I trust shal be shortely now, the wyche dothe comforthe me verie much whan I thynk of ett and wan I thynke agan that you shall departe from me agayne ytt makes my harte to dye to thynke what fortune I have that I cannot be always yn your company."

While some see this letter as clear proof of her infidelity, others have interpreted it as a means of appeasement. Could it be that Culpeper knew of her past and Catherine felt pressured to say whatever it took to keep him happy – and quiet? Or could it be that the letter was simply forged?

After all, it was found very conveniently in Culpeper's room following a chain of events set in motion by John Lascelles – the brother of Mary, the nursemaid who had come between Catherine and Mannox at Horsham. John had heard Mary talk of the queen's "light" ways, and reported this to Thomas Cranmer, the archbishop of Canterbury. On 2 November – All Souls' Day – Cranmer slipped Henry a note during Mass, revealing that "one Francis Dereham had lain in bed with [Catherine] an hundred nights" and that "one Mannock, a servant, knew a privy mark on her body".

At first, the king refused to believe it, and ordered that the Lascelles, Dereham and Mannox all be interrogated. Dereham confessed to having had a sexual relationship with the queen but insisted that there had been a pre-contract of marriage. Were he telling the truth, Henry's marriage to Catherine would have been bigamous, and he could easily have had it annulled. But when Catherine was interrogated by Cranmer, she refused to acknowledge any such arrangement.



Catherine was beheaded at 7am on Monday 13 February 1542 at the Tower of London. It took just one stroke of the axe to kill her

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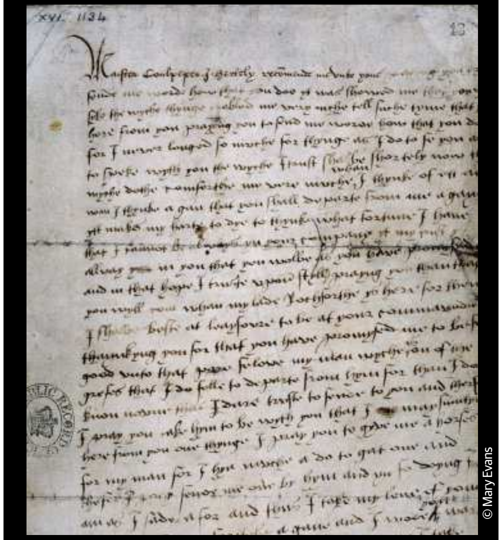
A Changing Reputation

It's only recently that historians have begun to focus more on the possibility that Catherine was a victim of child abuse, rather than whether or not she was unfaithful

Not surprisingly, Tudor chroniclers treated Catherine Howard with a great deal of contempt and even into the 20th century, respectable historians continued to paint her with the same bristly brush. In his 1961 book *A Tudor Tragedy*, Lacey Baldwin Smith described Catherine as "promiscuous" and a "juvenile delinquent", while in 1991, Alison Weir wrote that she was an "empty-headed wanton". However, not all interpretations have been as harsh.

Lucy Worsley, chief curator at Historic Royal Palaces, is one of her most passionate defenders. She argues that: "It's all very well to describe her 'easy charm', and her 'abundant store of good nature', but it is questionable to do so about a girl who, from the age of 11 or 12 onwards, had older men coming into her bedroom." Worsley camps alongside those who believe the letter to Culpeper was written in fear: "This isn't a sexual predator, but a naïve young woman eager to please, and that's the most pitiful thing of all. She may have been young, and foolish, but it is intolerably unfair that her lasting reputation should be as a silly little slut." Whether the affair with Culpeper happened or not we may never know, but in a modern context, this part of the story has become almost irrelevant.



© Mary Evans

Initially, she denied the relationship completely, but eventually admitted to having lain with him "diverse times". Had she not denied the contract, her life may well have been saved.

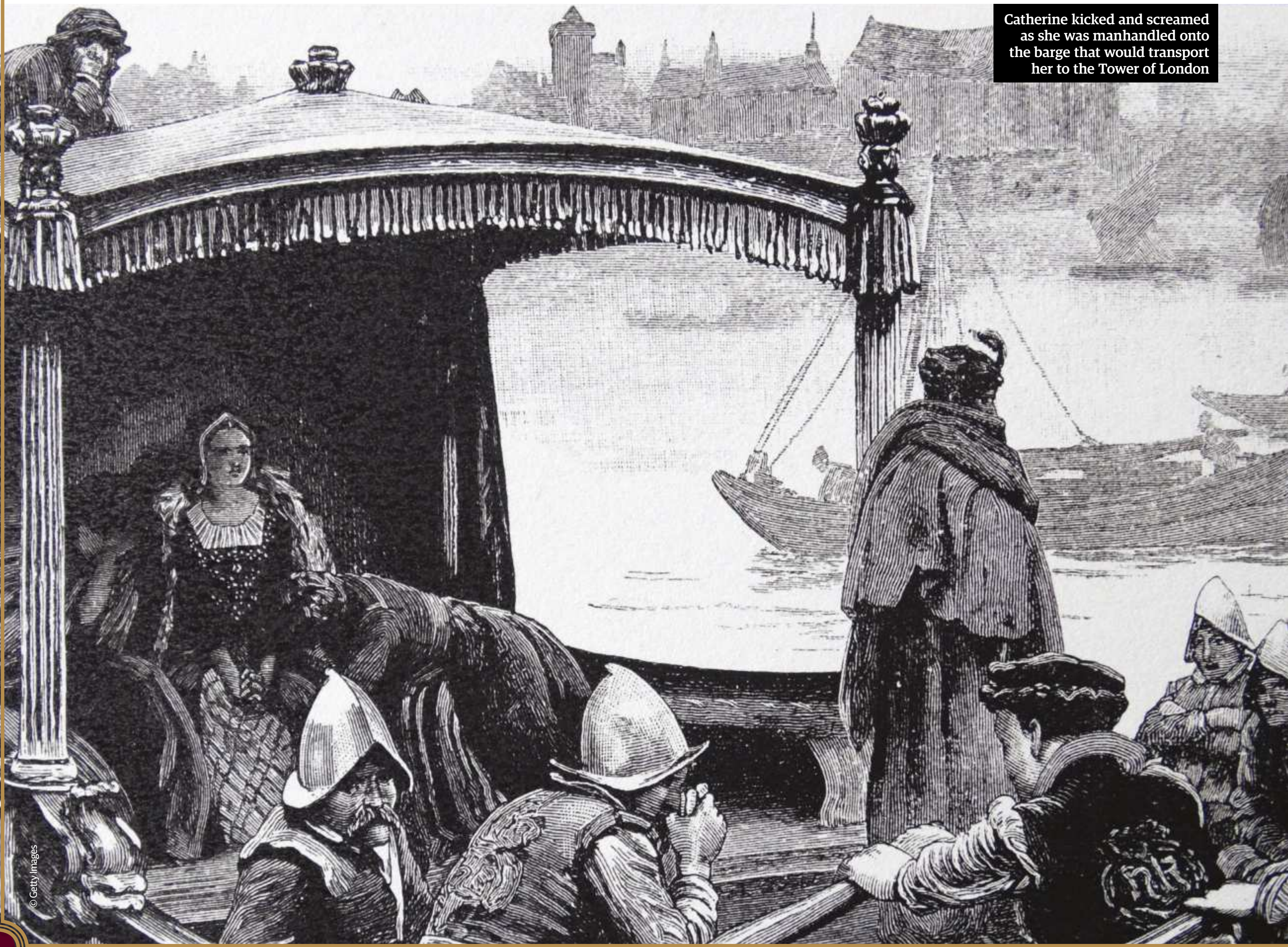
When Henry received her written confession, he called for a sword so that he could kill her himself. Thankfully for Catherine, he had a change of heart, but chose to leave the palace that night. It is said that the hysterical queen ran down the corridor after him begging for mercy and had to be dragged back to her bedchamber by her guards. It was the last time she would ever see him.

Arrangements were made for her to be moved to the dissolved Abbey of Syon until a decision had been reached about what to do next. Meanwhile, Dereham was interrogated once more and - possibly under torture - admitted that he had been replaced in Catherine's affections by Thomas Culpeper. Culpeper's room was searched and the letter discovered. On 11 November, Culpeper was arrested and questioned. He confessed that he and the queen had had several meetings and that she had sent him many gifts. Catherine also admitted this but she also insisted that it was Culpeper who had done the chasing, and that she had asked Lady Rochford "bid him desire no more to trouble me or send to me". While she was undoubtedly fond of Culpeper, who she called a "little sweet fool", she obstinately claimed that her affection went no further. She had instructed him to only come when Rochford was with her - the presence of a chaperone ensuring that propriety was being observed. As for whether Culpeper had lain with her, she "denied [it] upon her oath, or touching any bare of her but her hand".

> "HAD SHE NOT DENIED THE CONTRACT, HER LIFE MAY WELL HAVE BEEN SAVED"

But the archbishop and the rest of the king's council had already made up their minds. On 10 December, Culpeper and Dereham were executed for high treason. Culpeper avoided a traitor's death thanks to his position at court, and was permitted a simple beheading. Dereham received no such mercy. He was hanged until close to death, then castrated and disemboweled while still alive, before eventually being beheaded and quartered. Both of their heads were set on spikes on London Bridge as a gruesome warning to all.

As to what to charge Catherine with, the council was unsure. Technically, she had committed no crime. Of course, in Tudor times, a simple



Catherine kicked and screamed as she was manhandled onto the barge that would transport her to the Tower of London

© Getty Images

answer could always be found, if not created. On 7 February 1542, the Royal Assent by Commission Act made it treason – punishable by death – for a queen consort to fail to disclose her sexual history to the king, or to incite someone to commit adultery with her. Catherine Howard could finally be found guilty.

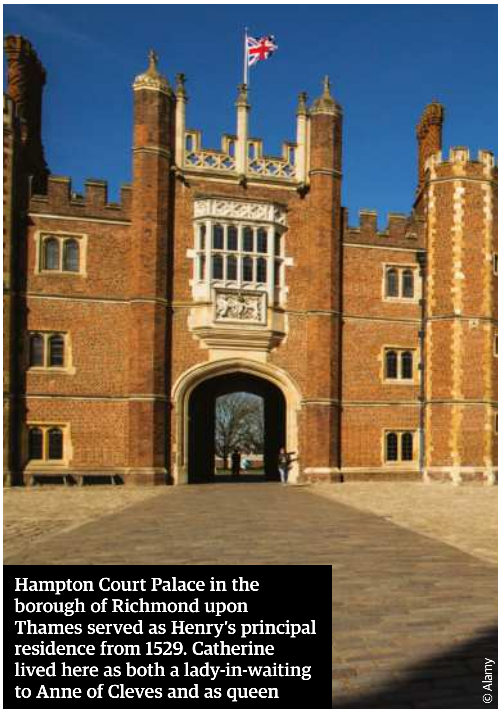
Her screams could be heard all around when the lords of the council came for her and bundled her onto a waiting barge. As the morbid procession passed under London Bridge towards the Tower of London, Catherine was forced to stare at the rotting faces of Dereham and Culpeper, a cold reminder of the fate that she awaited.

Her execution was scheduled for the morning of 13 February. The night before, she asked for the block to be brought to her prison cell so that she could practise placing her head upon it. As dawn broke, Catherine was helped up onto the scaffold. Though pale and terrified, she remained relatively composed as she made her parting speech, describing her punishment as "worthy and just".

A much-recited anecdote claimed that her final words were "I die a queen, but I would rather have died the wife of Culpeper," although there are no eyewitness accounts to substantiate this. Her head was detached with a single stroke of the axe. She was probably no more than 20 years old.

Lady Rochford was executed immediately after, and both of their remains were buried in an unmarked grave in the nearby chapel of Saint Peter ad Vincula, where Catherine's cousins Anne and George Boleyn also lay. Catherine's bones have never been found, and plaque on the west wall dedicated to those who died in the Tower is all there is to commemorate her short life.

"CATHERINE WAS FORCED TO STARE AT THE ROTTING FACES OF DEREHAM AND CULPEPER"


Hampton Court Palace in the borough of Richmond upon Thames served as Henry's principal residence from 1529. Catherine lived here as both a lady-in-waiting to Anne of Cleves and as queen

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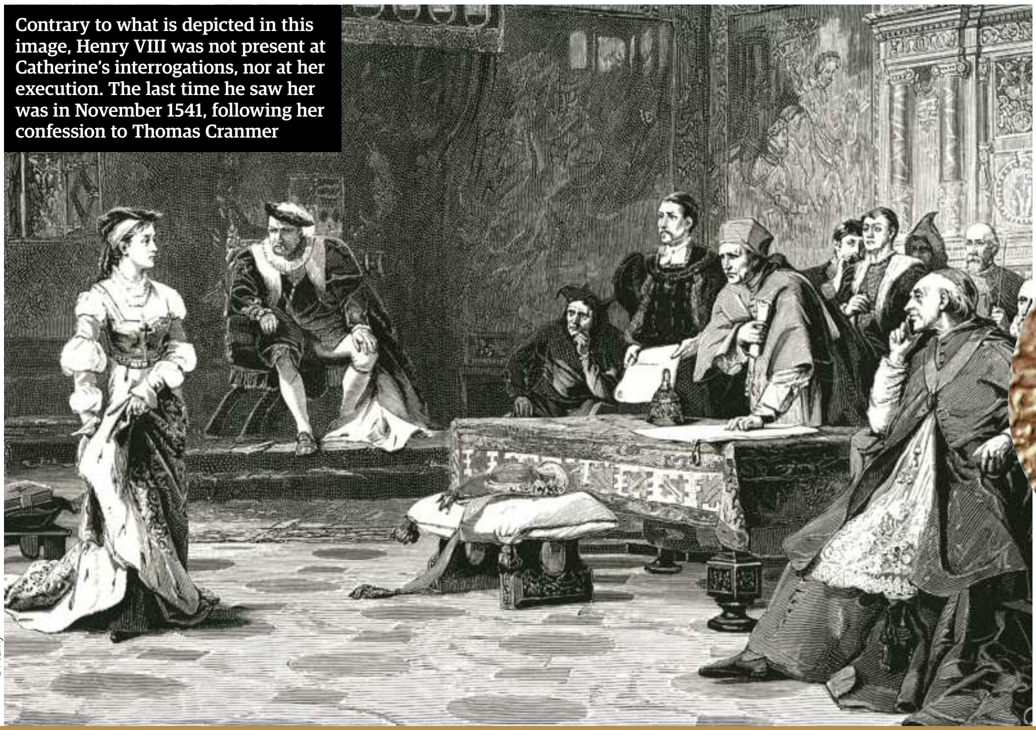
Contrary to what is depicted in this image, Henry VIII was not present at Catherine's interrogations, nor at her execution. The last time he saw her was in November 1541, following her confession to Thomas Cranmer

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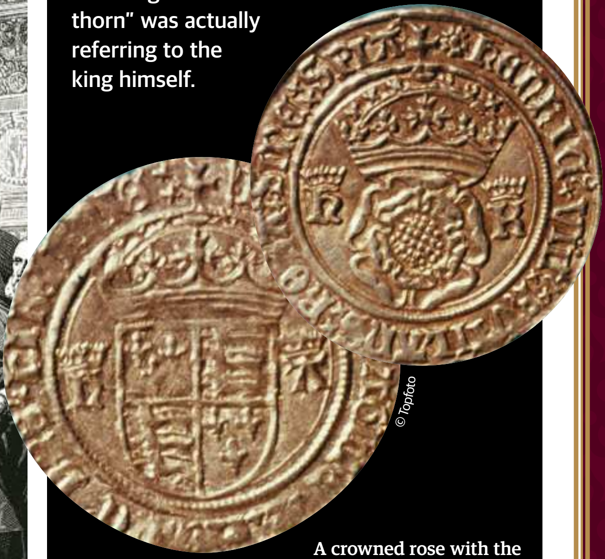
A ROSE WITHOUT A THORN

Was Henry VIII really so poetic in the descriptions of his wife?

It is said that Henry described her as the "very jewel of womanhood" and, most famously, a "rose without a thorn". The king was besotted with Catherine – young, beautiful and lively – right from the beginning. Even when the accusations were made against her, Henry initially refused to believe them, suggesting that even the absence of a child had done little to dent his affections. But did he really call her a rose without a thorn, or, like so many famous words from history, is this just another myth?

The first author known to attribute this to Henry's queen is Agnes Strickland, a Victorian historian. She writes: "He could neither afford to honour Catherine Howard with a public bridal nor a coronation, but he paid her the compliment of causing gold coins to be struck in commemoration of their marriage… with the following legend: "HENRICUS VIII. RUTILANS ROSA SINE SPINA." In fact, the 'Crown of the Rose' coin was struck in 1526, when Henry was still married to Catherine of Aragon. The "dazzling rose without a thorn" was actually referring to the king himself.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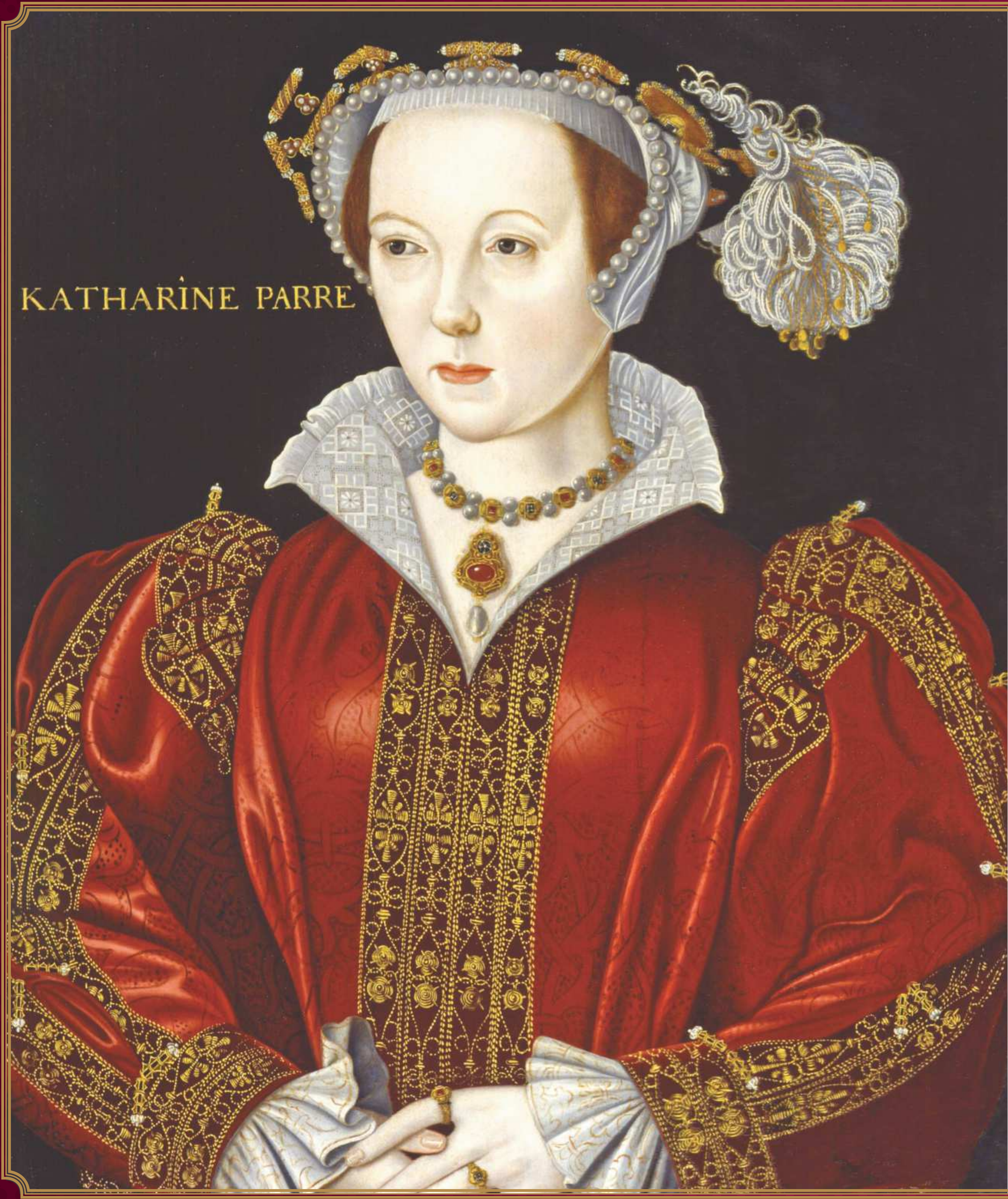
A crowned rose with the inscription "HENRIC VIII RUTILANS ROSA SINE SPINA" can clearly be seen on this gold coin dated 1526


KATHARINE PARRE

THE WIFE THAT LIVED

Henry VIII's last wife wasn't just lucky to outlive him – she was a shrewd queen who knew how to keep her head

Words Willow Winsham

The sixth and final wife of Henry VIII is not generally as well known nor as popular as the five who came before her. Often depicted as a matronly nursemaid for Henry's final years, or a devout yet somewhat boring reformer, Catherine Parr has found herself relegated to the sidelines in histories of Henry's reign. Although this unbalance has been redressed in recent years, it is still fair to say she is remembered mostly for the fact that she survived marriage to one of England's most unpredictable monarchs. What, then, was Catherine's secret? How did she manage to survive marriage to Henry?

The 31-year-old Catherine was no blushing virginal bride when she became Henry's queen. She had been married twice previously, seeing both husbands to the grave before she caught the attention of the king in 1543. Henry was not her only suitor: she was also being pursued by Thomas Seymour, brother to the late Jane Seymour who had provided Henry with his desperately desired son. Although attractive and Catherine's first choice of match, there was no question of Seymour standing in the way of the king, and he stepped aside.

The marriage to Henry was not a foregone conclusion, however. It was not a decision Catherine made lightly and her later account of what happened – though no doubt penned with the benefit of hindsight – reveals her inner struggle as she decided whether to become England's next queen. Not a great deal is known of Henry's courtship of Catherine, nor exactly when he proposed. Their marriage license was issued on 10 July 1543 by Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury, with the marriage ceremony following just two days later. It was not a large, glittering affair; only a select handful of people attended the wedding at Hampton Court as Catherine became Henry's sixth wife.

One thing that set Catherine off on good footing was that, due to the lucky circumstances, the newlyweds had a 'honeymoon' period of about six months, with Catherine in Henry's company throughout that time. By the time they parted due to necessities of state, it was clear Catherine knew how to manage Henry. A great reader of people, she learned quickly what interested her husband and what did not, how to hold his attention, and, crucially, how to ensure the egotistical monarch felt firmly at the centre of affairs.

Quite simply, she dedicated herself to being the queen that Henry needed and wanted her to be. This may not have all been pretence. Although there is generally a view that Catherine endured marriage to Henry, from the evidence it is far from beyond the realms of plausibility that she was genuinely fond of her husband and got a great deal of satisfaction from being his wife. From accounts, it is clear that she enjoyed the fine clothes and jewellery that came from marriage with Henry. She also had a passion for hunting, dancing and music – all things that were likewise shared by the king and would have helped endear her to her new husband.

© Alamy

Kendal Castle, the supposed birthplace of Catherine Parr

Catherine also recognised the importance of courting the favour of Henry's children. The future Edward VI was only five years old when Catherine caught his father's eye, and Elizabeth was nearly ten at the time of their marriage. Both children had been lacking a mother figure for some time, and Catherine adeptly stepped into the role, keeping up correspondence with the half-siblings and ensuring that she visited when she could. Neither did she neglect Henry's elder daughter, Mary. Catherine approached the often lonely young woman as a friend, and Mary welcomed her company.

The first few years of marriage passed smoothly, and the trust Henry put in his wife was made evident in 1544 when he left her in charge of the country to go to war in France. Although she ruled with a council to assist her, the role of regent was no empty title, and Catherine held a great deal of power. That she was more than up to the task was clear, and Henry was confident his wife would promote his interests and provide the crucial aid necessary to keep his campaign afloat, as he doggedly embarked on the conquering of the long-coveted Boulogne. Catherine was, in total, regent for the best part of three months, filling a role that only one other of Henry's queens, Catherine of Aragon - Catherine's own namesake and possibly godmother - had held. It might seem, then, that Catherine Parr was untouchable, but there were two areas where she was on shaky ground, and they nearly led to her downfall: children and religion.

Catherine's failure to produce a child - any child, much less the second son for Henry that would keep the Tudor line alive - was something of which both she and Henry must have been acutely aware. Although Catherine had not produced children with her first two husbands, this fact does not seem to have stood against her when Henry decided to marry her. It's possible the monarch convinced himself that his predecessors were simply too old or inept to perform the task required of them. He, of course, could.

An embroidered book binding by an 11-year-old Elizabeth to Queen Catherine

When, after several years of marriage, it became glaringly apparent this was not the case, it is likely the king's famous conscience, which had led him to ruthlessly set aside his first wife and break with Rome, felt a prickle. Indeed, in February 1546, the imperial ambassador reported to his master that rumours had surfaced that would no doubt have made Catherine's blood run cold: Henry was again looking for a new queen, the current one to be replaced due to her inability to provide the child that was not only her privilege but her duty. Although the report also stressed that Henry's behaviour towards his wife had not outwardly altered, this was not, as others had found to their cost, necessarily a sign that all was well, and Catherine was understandably unhappy.

The matter that caused the most friction, as Catherine discovered to her cost, was that of religion. With an interest in scripture and religious discussion instilled within her by her upbringing, in the first years of her marriage to Henry, Catherine's religious views saw a steady development. She devoted increasing time to exploring the word of God and the battle between reform and tradition that was taking place in her husband's lands, developing her own reform-oriented ideas. Although not the zealous Protestant she is so often painted to be, Catherine had a keen interest in the betterment of the English church, and many of those within her household likewise supported reform to a greater or lesser extent. Among other things, Catherine was a vociferous supporter of church services taking place in English, believing that people should have direct access to God through the reading and understanding of his word. She was not slow to discuss these ideas with her husband, and their religious debates were well known.

As an extension of this, and encouraged by the books she read and those around her, Catherine embarked upon her own literary works. Skilled at collecting the works of others, she edited and published several projects, one of the most well known being a translation of *Paraphrases of the New Testament* by the famed scholar Erasmus. Her *Prayers and Meditations* was the first book of its kind to be produced by a queen of England, and at the end of 1545, Catherine had already began a work that would not be published until after Henry's death – *Lamentation of a Sinner* was remarkable for being the first work of that nature by an English woman

Although Henry seems to have tolerated and even enjoyed his wife's foray into the world of religious opinion, there was a line that the relatively conservative monarch was not willing to cross. When a misjudged New Year's gift from Catherine's step-daughter Elizabeth to her father proved to be none other than a translation of the queen's own work, it may have been something of a rude awakening for the king. Although he had no doubt been aware of his wife's dabbling in religious writing, being faced with her promotion of ideas that were verging further than his own – Henry was growing increasingly unhappy with the spread of religious texts in English, fearing that the common people especially would abuse this – was another matter entirely.

The famous account of what followed presents Catherine as far from shy to venture opinions when it came to religion, encouraging debate, and generally using her husband as a sounding board for her growing ideas on religion and reform. From Catherine's perspective, this was a two-way affair, with Henry getting as much satisfaction from their talks as she did, but, unknown to the queen, Henry had had enough.

The king bided his time for a while, and the oblivious Catherine continued in ignorance until, one day during a conversation, Henry abruptly changed the subject. Although surprised, this warning signal does not seem to have been heeded: none the wiser, Catherine left her husband that day thinking all was well, the wily monarch having kept up the act of attentive and loving husband until the door was closed behind her. Once Catherine was out of earshot, however, Henry vented his feelings. Making his displeasure at the situation known to Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, he lamented that it was a sorry day when a wife dared to teach her husband.

No friend of the queen, this was the sign that Gardiner had been waiting for. Feigning reluctance, he carefully intimated that much of what Henry's dear queen ventured in the name of religion could equally be labelled as heretical sedition; he would not speak further, however, without the king's express permission, nor without reassurance that the king would support and protect him, as what he was about to say

THE MANY HUSBANDS OF CATHERINE PARR

Married four times in total, Catherine holds the record for the most married of England's queens

1. EDWARD BOROUGH

Date of marriage: 1529
Date of death: 1533

Knighted by Henry VIII and a justice of the peace in their Lincolnshire home of Kirton-in-Lindsey, Borough died after just four years of marriage, leaving Catherine a widow at the young age of 20.

2. JOHN NEVILLE, LORD LATIMER

Date of marriage: 1534
Date of death: 1543

Latimer was caught up in the Pilgrimage of Grace when he was forced to speak for the rebels against the government. Latimer escaped their fate, and Catherine seems to have felt affection towards him.

3. KING HENRY VIII

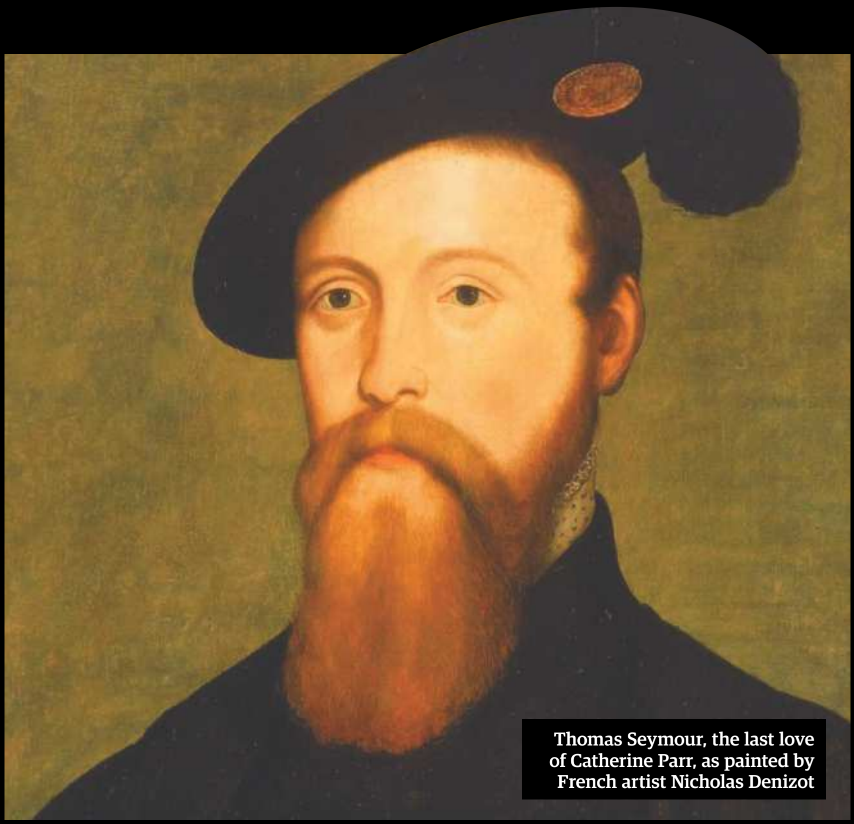
Date of marriage: 1543
Date of death: 1547

Catherine's best known marriage, it could be argued it was also her most successful. With much in common and fond of each other, the two weathered the storms about them, her position bringing with it many advantages.

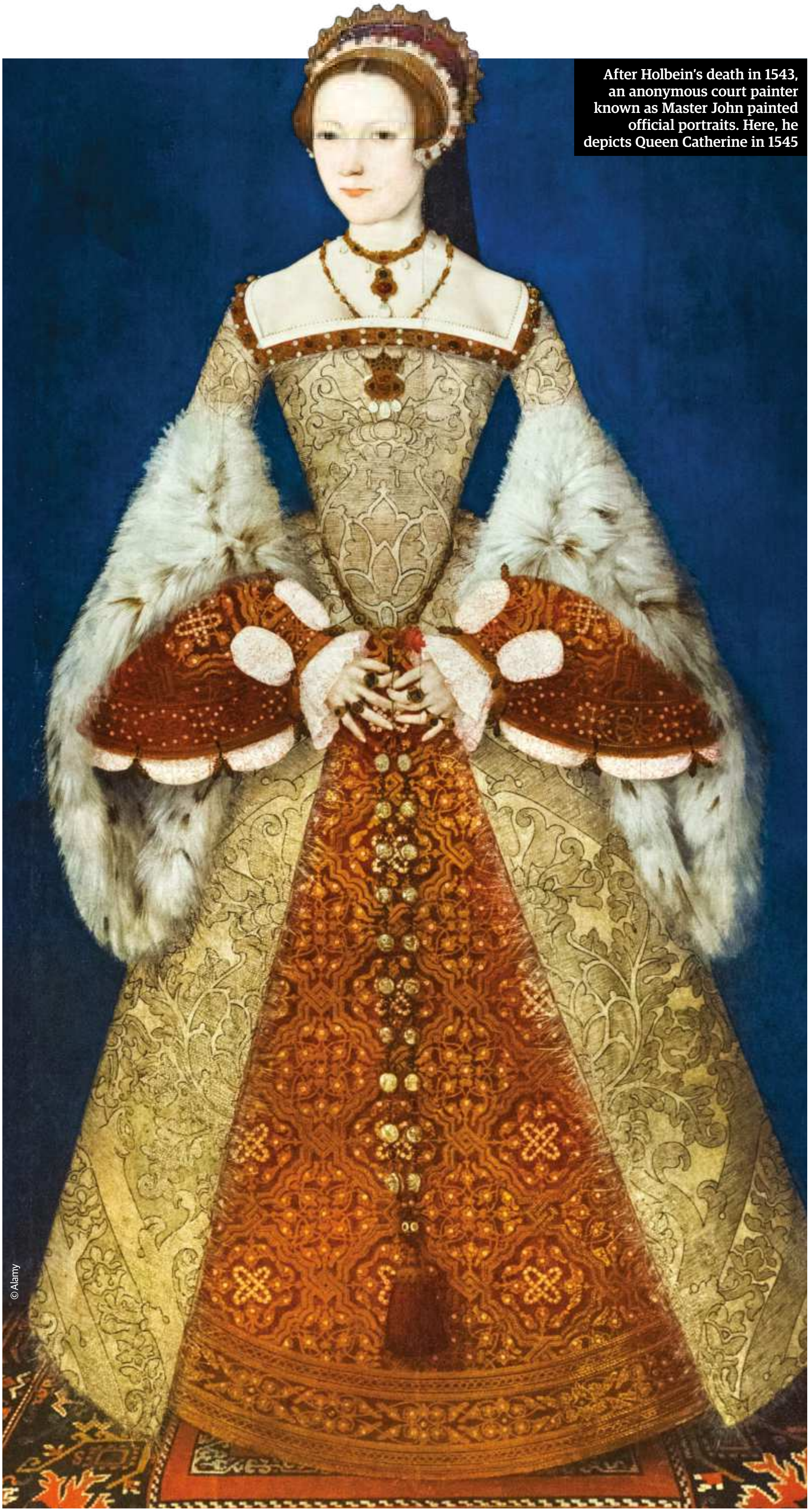
4. THOMAS SEYMOUR

Date of marriage: 1547

Although known as the love of her life, Catherine's marriage to Seymour was turbulent, tarnished by tales of impropriety between Thomas and Catherine's step-daughter, the future Elizabeth I. Although reconciled, the marriage ended in tragedy, Catherine dying after giving birth in 1548.



Thomas Seymour, the last love of Catherine Parr, as painted by French artist Nicholas Denizot



After Holbein's death in 1543, an anonymous court painter known as Master John painted official portraits. Here, he depicts Queen Catherine in 1545

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could land him in grave trouble. But, with Henry's say-so, he could prove the queen was working in league with others who were plotting sedition, and a threat to the religious stability of the realm.

It seems Henry agreed to this, the suspicious king always on the look out for any whiff of plot and treason. Even as the king continued to outwardly dote upon his wife, Gardiner set things in motion to act against Catherine, gathering information and evidence that would bring down the woman he saw as advocating radical religious reform and with too much sway over the king. A plot was hatched, wherein several of Catherine's ladies would be arrested, their belongings searched, and, when incriminating evidence was no doubt found, the queen would in turn find herself apprehended. When found guilty, she would be taken to the Tower of London to await the same fate that had befallen two of Henry's previous queens.

Indeed, for Anne Boleyn and Catherine's immediate predecessor, the young, flighty Catherine Howard, plummeting in Henry's esteem had spelled the end. Catherine's fate was to be very different. Perhaps it was due to a change of heart in the ailing king, or perhaps he had truly never meant for matters to go so far over what was really just an irritation such as occurred in any marriage, however happy. It might have even been part of a convoluted mind game all along, with Henry playing one side against the other in order to keep the ultimate prize: control. Whatever the cause, news of the plot against Catherine was revealed by Henry himself to one of his doctors. This in itself would not have likely saved the queen, but more was yet to come. The paper containing the charges to be made against Catherine, signed by the king, was "accidentally" dropped. Duly discovered, the document was taken to Catherine to warn her of what lay ahead unless she acted, and acted quickly.

It was an event that would shatter Catherine's usual calm and poise; understandably the queen was greatly unsettled by the news, her response one of terror and hysteria. She was right to be frightened; her enemies were after her blood and Henry had, it seemed, risen to take the bait. So terrified was she that she was physically ill: comfort came then in the form of the very doctor to whom Henry had first confided his plan, the man offering her the way out of her perilous position. All Catherine had to do was to submit herself wholly to the king's good judgement, leaving him in no doubt as to her submission. If she could convince her husband that she was his to command, Henry would, the doctor insisted, be quick to revert to his previously good opinion of her and all would be well.

Luck was on Catherine's side, as the chance to set the process in motion presented itself when Henry himself came to visit her, having heard she was ill. Still fearful, Catherine's distress at having upset her husband was clear; it had not been her

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In 1543 Catherine was married to Henry VIII in a small ceremony at Hampton Court Palace

> "CATHERINE KEPT HER HEAD AND PLAYED IT CALM, HIDING HER TERROR"

intention, and she would never knowingly cause his displeasure. Henry reassured her that all was well, staying with her to add the comfort of his presence to his words.

This apparent reprieve spurred Catherine into action, and she wasted no time in making sure that any books she or her ladies owned that might be incriminating were removed. Then, if the story is to be believed, Catherine made perhaps the boldest move of her life: she went to Henry's rooms to re-establish her position once and for all. He had several gentlemen accompanying him, but this did not deter the determined Catherine. When Henry drew talk to the matter of religion and asked for his wife's opinion, with everything depending upon her response, Catherine kept her head and played it calm, hiding her terror behind the poise she had cultivated for so long. She could not venture an answer, Catherine told her husband, being only an inferior, unskilled woman who, by dint of her sex, lacked the wisdom afforded to men. She would, instead, bow to Henry's own opinion on the matter. At that, Henry pushed the point, referring to their previous discussions, leaving her in no doubt that he saw her lecturing as beyond what was to be tolerated by him from a wife. Catherine told him again she had meant no offence, and none of what she had said should be taken with anything approaching seriousness. Far from wanting to instruct and influence her husband in any matter, much less religion, she had simply been trying to distract him from the pain she knew he suffered in his leg, hoping to help him pass the time during which he was in discomfort. Furthermore, she had secretly hoped that by drawing the king to discuss religion, she might, herself, learn much, increasing her own education.

Henry was all too ready to accept this earnest explanation and apology, and he declared himself both relieved and satisfied to learn that his spouse was, after all, the paragon of wifely submission he had first thought, and that he would have no need for the arrest warrant that drawn up in her name. Before they parted, she was sitting on his knee and words of affection were exchanged between the couple, Catherine's position, once more, secure.

The postscript to this affair publicly consolidated Catherine's position and was a warning to anyone who might think to try to move against her. Catherine was spending time with Henry in the gardens when the chancellor, one of the prime movers against her along with Gardiner, arrived with 40 armed men to arrest the queen. Initially triumphant, he found, to his horror, that the rules had changed without anyone telling him. Instead of welcoming him, Henry responded with indignant outrage, loudly and brutally berating the man who thought he was doing his king's bidding and sending him away confused and no doubt worrying about his own prospects.

There is likelihood that the account handed down, written after all the main players in the saga, including Catherine were dead, was greatly embellished, written as it was by one who made no effort to hide the fact he was well and truly on Catherine's side. But one thing is certain; Catherine had faced and survived a situation that might well have led her to the block.

Without a doubt there was a concerted move against those advocating further reform: in 1546 a well-born young woman named Anne Askew was arrested, questioned and tortured in an attempt to get her to incriminate those who also shared her views. It is very possible that Catherine was one of the intended targets and that she was aware of the danger she might be in from the enemies of reform; she had made sure that her rooms and chests had new locks on them around the start of the unrest. Although Catherine escaped, Askew refused the many opportunities offered to take back her words, and went to the stake on 26 July.

Henry died in January 1547, and although she must have grieved for her husband, Catherine was now free to follow her own desires, a rare survivor of Henry's volatile affections. Indeed, it might be argued that Catherine was saved, ultimately, because of a simple fact so often overlooked: Henry loved and admired the woman he had chosen as his sixth and final queen, and she him.

THE SEVENTH BRIDE

Did Henry VIII really consider making the outspoken and opinionated Katherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, his seventh wife?

Written by Melanie Clegg

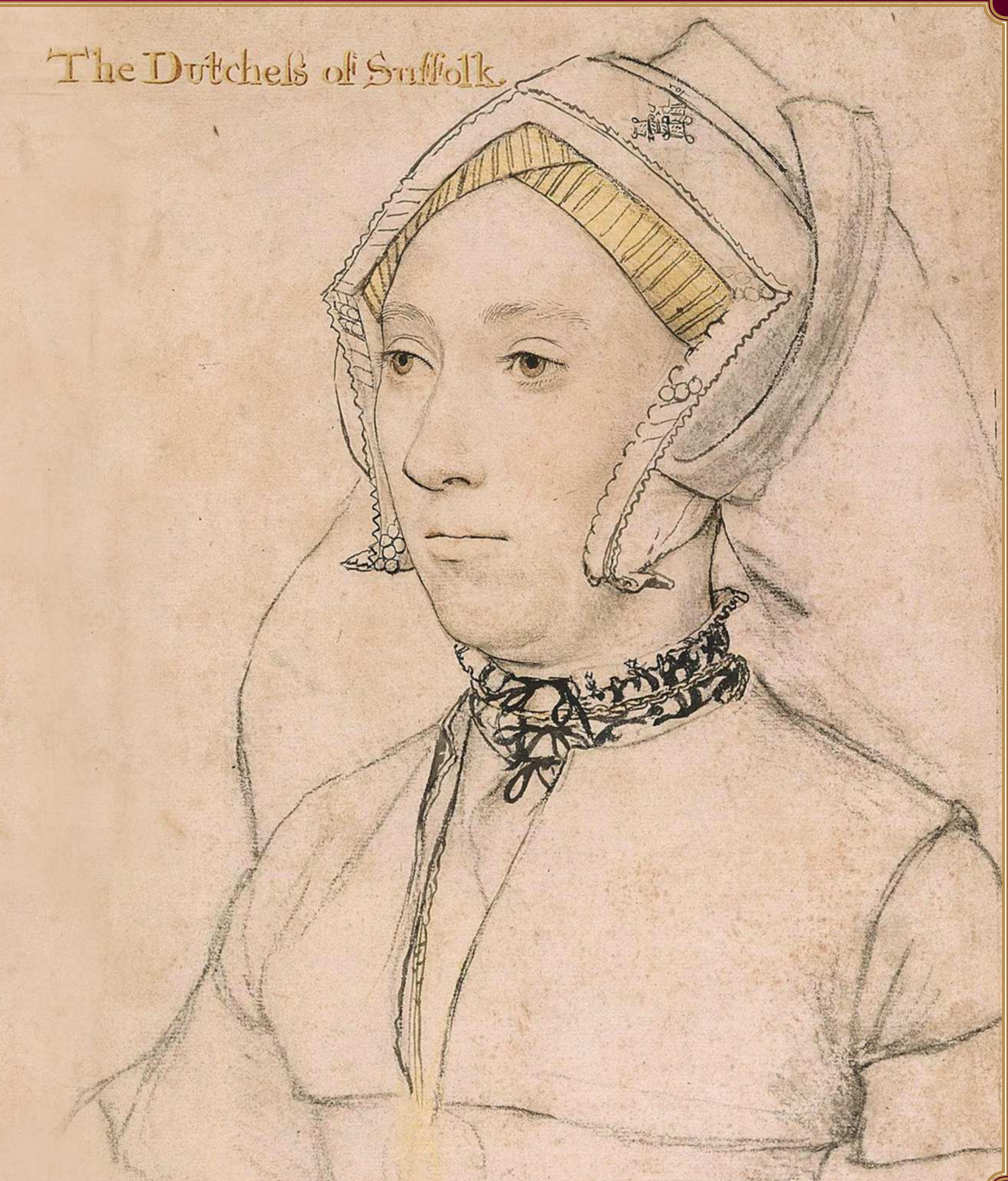
> “Seven-year-old Katherine was one of the greatest heiresses of her time”

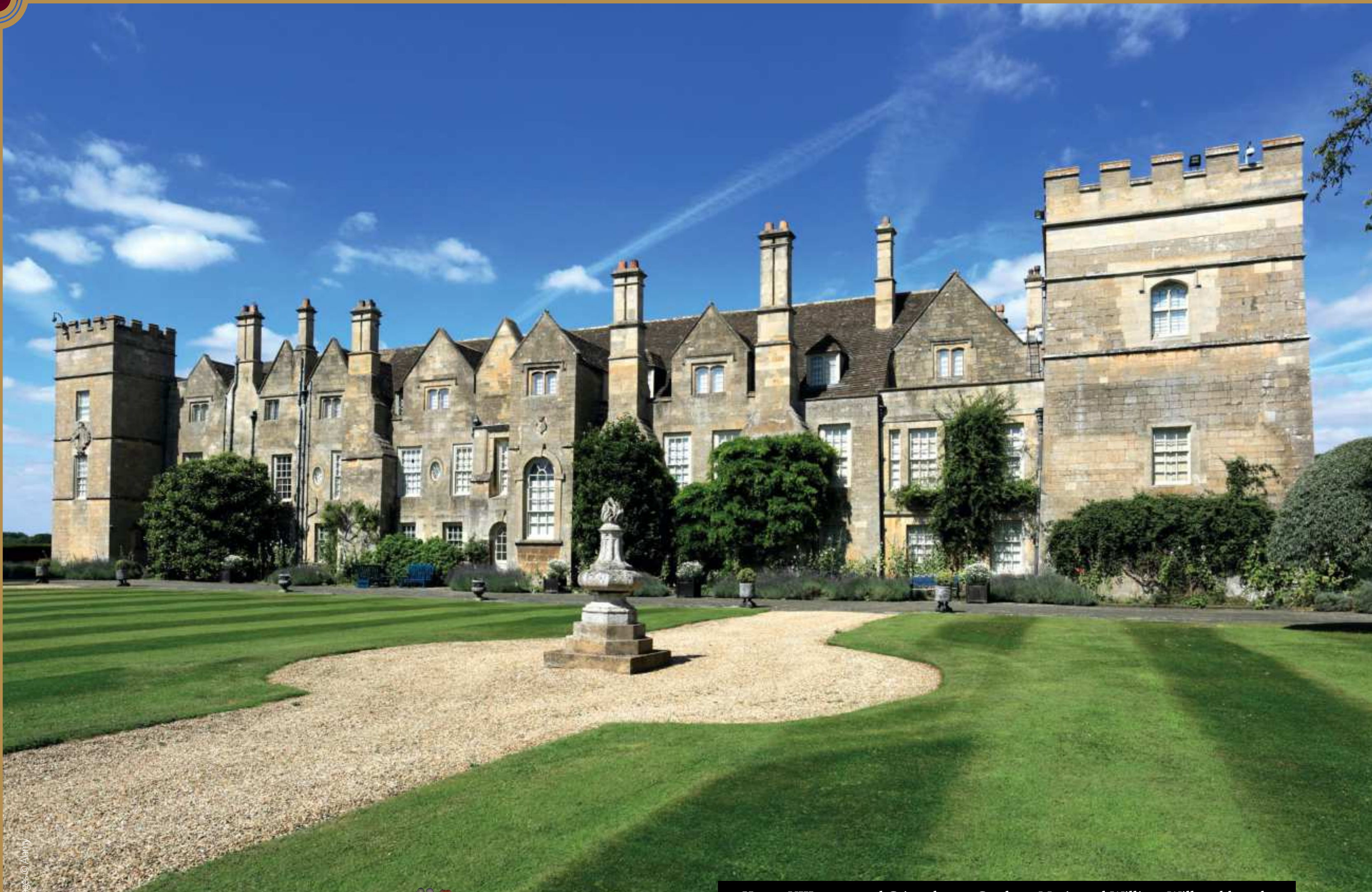
When Catherine of Aragon arrived in England on 2 October 1501, she brought with her a large entourage, which included several maids of honour. Their parents considered it a great honour for their daughters to accompany the future queen of England to her new life as wife to Arthur, Prince of Wales and heir to Henry VII. The following spring, more maidens arrived, this time dressed in mourning. They'd been despatched by Catherine's mother, Queen Isabella, as soon as news arrived of Arthur's death just months after the wedding. The Spanish queen hoped that the familiar faces might help her grieving daughter. Among one of these two groups was Maria de Salinas, whose family were prominent at the Castilian court and may even have been distantly related to the royal family. It's possible that the two girls knew each other in Spain because we know they quickly became extremely close in the wake of Prince Arthur's death.

The devoted Maria remained at Catherine's side throughout the difficult next seven years as the Spanish princess existed in a state of agonising limbo and even, on occasion, relative poverty on the periphery of her father-in-law's court as she waited to learn if she was to return to Spain or marry the next in line to the throne, Prince Henry. Maria's great loyalty was amply rewarded in the summer of 1509 when Henry VII died and within two months her mistress Catherine had married the new king, which naturally raised the prestige of her favourite lady-in -waiting.

When Maria married the wealthy landowner William Willoughby, 11th Baron Willoughby de Eresby, on 5 June 1516, the king and queen made their approval of the match clear by providing Maria with a generous dowry, hosting the couple's wedding at Greenwich Palace and presenting them with Grimsthorpe Castle in Lincolnshire. When the couple's daughter, Katherine, was born on 22 March 1519, Queen Catherine was naturally invited to be her godmother. It was a function that she also fulfilled for Catherine Parr, whose mother was also a lady-in-waiting and close friend. Like the queen, Lady Willoughby suffered the sadness of losing children in infancy. This left Katherine as sole heiress to the Willoughby fortune, which included over 60 estates, and the seven-year-old became one of the greatest heiresses of her time when her father died in 1526. Although her mother Maria was still alive at the time of her father's death, Katherine nonetheless became a ward of King Henry, who still took a relatively friendly interest in the family even though his marriage to Catherine of Aragon was effectively over.

In March 1528, Katherine's wardship was sold on to Henry's great friend and brother-in-law, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. He owned extensive property and was keen to secure Katherine as a bride for his son, Henry Brandon, Earl of Lincoln, who was four years younger than his prospective wife and wouldn't be ready for marriage for


The Dutchess of Suffolk.

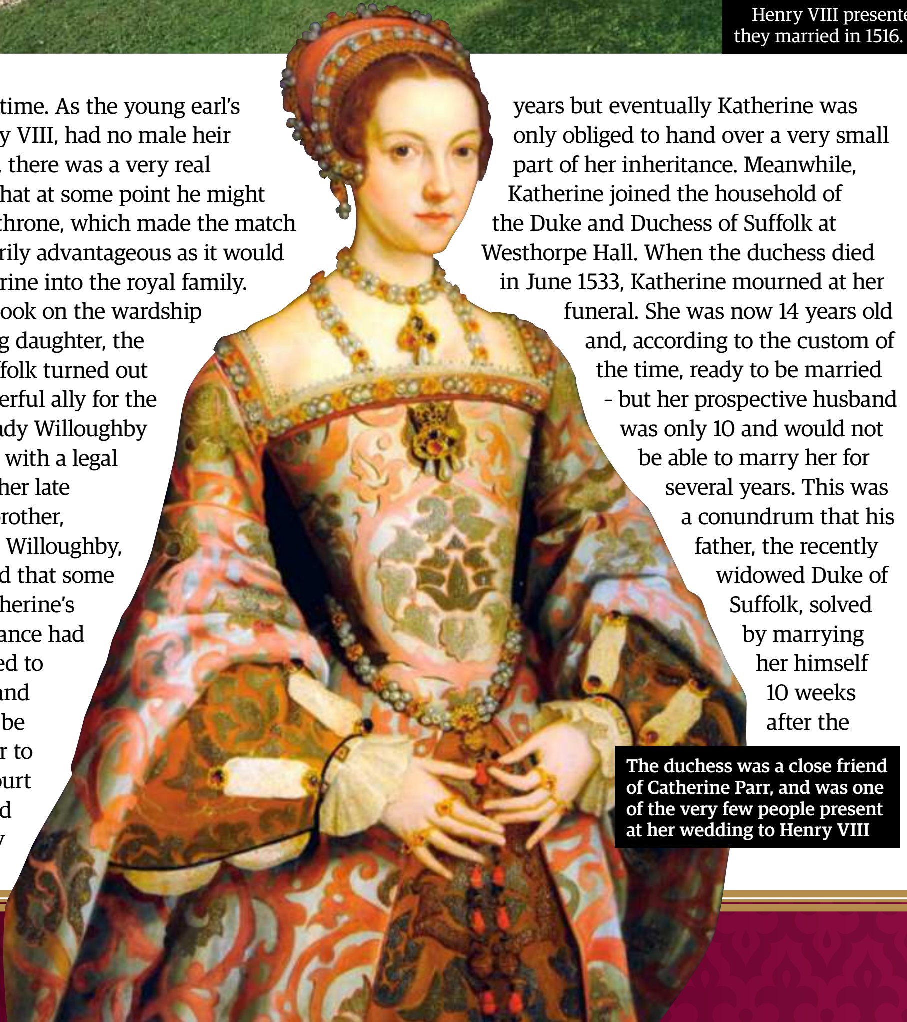


Henry VIII presented Grimsthorpe Castle to Maria and William Willoughby when they married in 1516. It remains in the hands of Katherine's descendants to this day

All images © Alamy

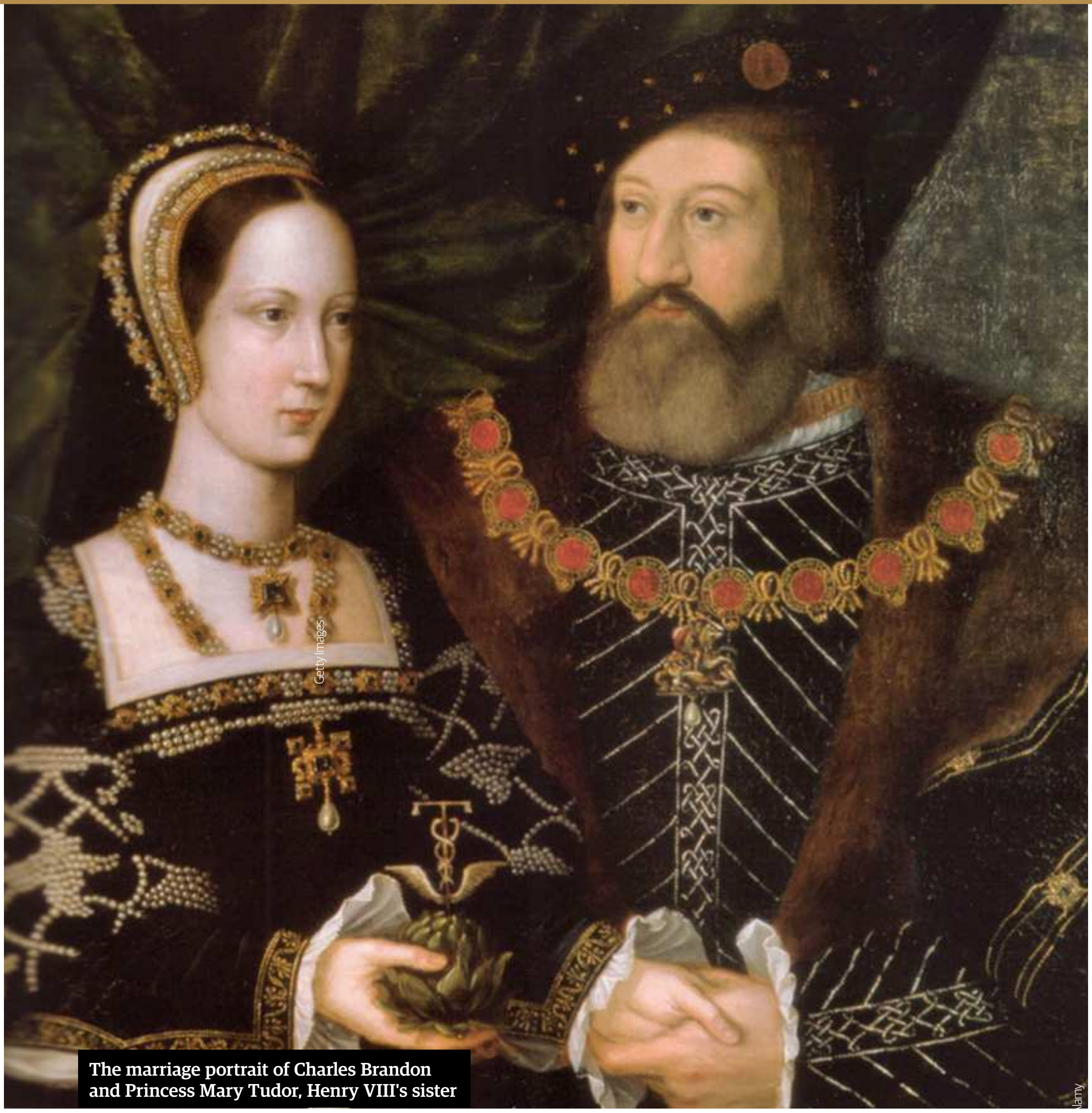
quite some time. As the young earl's uncle, Henry VIII, had no male heir at this time, there was a very real possibility that at some point he might inherit the throne, which made the match extraordinarily advantageous as it would bring Katherine into the royal family.

After he took on the wardship of her young daughter, the Duke of Suffolk turned out to be a powerful ally for the widowed Lady Willoughby as she dealt with a legal battle with her late husband's brother, Christopher Willoughby, who claimed that some parts of Katherine's vast inheritance had been entailed to male heirs and so ought to be handed over to him. The court case dragged on for many years but eventually Katherine was only obliged to hand over a very small part of her inheritance. Meanwhile, Katherine joined the household of the Duke and Duchess of Suffolk at Westhorpe Hall. When the duchess died in June 1533, Katherine mourned at her funeral. She was now 14 years old and, according to the custom of the time, ready to be married - but her prospective husband was only 10 and would not be able to marry her for several years. This was a conundrum that his father, the recently widowed Duke of Suffolk, solved by marrying her himself 10 weeks after the death of his wife. At 49, the duke was 35 years older than his new bride who was, furthermore, his fourth wife. However, although later events showed just how strong-willed and even waspish the new Duchess of Suffolk could be, she appears to have entered this arrangement meekly enough, having been carefully raised like all other girls of her class and generation to obey her elders and place family honour above personal preference. Nonetheless, although some at court may have had their doubts about the mismatched alliance, it seems that the Suffolk marriage was a relatively happy one. It was certainly a fruitful one - the couple's first child, Henry, was born in September 1535, two years after their wedding - replacing Katherine's stepson (and former fiancé), Henry, who'd died in March 1934, as her husband's heir.



The duchess was a close friend of Catherine Parr, and was one of the very few people present at her wedding to Henry VIII

Due to his position at court, the Duke of Suffolk was obliged to offer at least nominal support to his close friend Henry VIII with regard to his ongoing divorce of Catherine of Aragon. However, his late wife had made no secret of her antipathy towards Anne Boleyn and refused to give up her friendship with her former sister-in-law. Now, he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The marriage portrait of Charles Brandon and Princess Mary Tudor, Henry VIII's sister

> "THE DUKE WAS 35 YEARS OLDER THAN HIS NEW BRIDE, WHO WAS, FURTHERMORE, HIS FOURTH WIFE"

once again found his loyalties divided as naturally his new wife Katherine was staunchly on the side of her godmother, who'd been banished from court. Although Katherine's mother, Maria, had been forbidden to see her friend and former mistress, when she learned that Catherine of Aragon lay close to death at Kimbolton Castle at the end of 1535, she inveigled her way inside and was at her side when she passed away on 7 January 1536. Katherine and her step-daughter were among the chief mourners at the funeral.

Just under five months later, Katherine accompanied her husband to a far happier royal occasion - the wedding of King Henry and Jane Seymour. As Duchess of Suffolk and wife to one of the king's closest and oldest friends, Katherine held a highly prominent position at court, and, thanks to her large personal fortune, she was able to live in splendour with fine clothes, dazzling jewels and magnificent furnishings.

When Anne of Cleves arrived in England in December 1539, it was Katherine and her husband who were despatched to Deal Castle to welcome her. Although King Henry's first meeting with his bride shortly afterwards was not a marked success, Katherine and Anne would become great friends. More importantly, Katherine was becoming increasingly friendly with King Henry, who clearly liked her company. The pair had started to exchange New Year's gifts in 1534, and by 1538 it was being noted at court that the king very much enjoyed dancing and making merry with the young Duchess of Suffolk. She was just 19 - three years younger than the king's daughter Lady Mary, with whom she had become friends. Although Henry VIII is known to have enjoyed the company of mistresses, they were usually

CHARLES BRANDON, DUKE OF SUFFOLK

The chequered marital history of Katherine's husband, the Duke of Suffolk, was complex even by Tudor standards

When Sir William Brandon, Henry VII's standard bearer, was killed by Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth Field in August 1485, the new Tudor king had his only son, Charles, raised at court as a mark of his gratitude. Charles Brandon became close friends with the king's second son, Henry, Duke of York, who succeeded his father as Henry VIII in 1509. Charles's friendship with Henry VIII, who made him Duke of Suffolk in 1514, lasted for the rest of his life, although it was temporarily threatened when Charles secretly married Henry's youngest sister, Mary, Dowager Queen of France, in 1515, after which the couple temporarily lost Henry's favour and were banished from court.

Charles's marital history was as complicated as that of his best friend. As a young man, he became engaged to Anne Browne, but then deserted her when she was pregnant with their eldest daughter, Anne, in order to marry her far more wealthy widowed aunt, Margaret Neville. Less than two years later, he had his marriage to Margaret annulled due to consanguinity, referring to his previous relationship with her niece. Charles and Anne married and had a second daughter, Mary, in 1510. Anne passed away soon after.

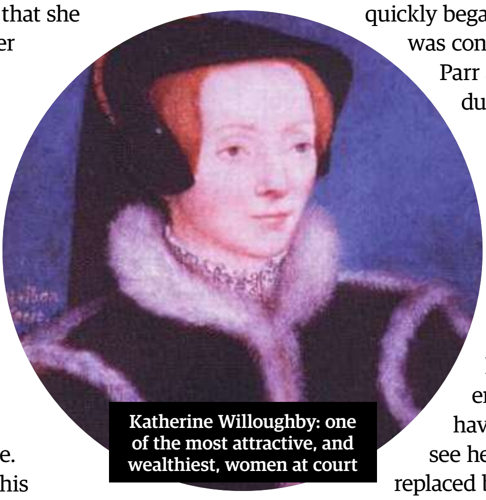
In 1513, at the age of 29, Brandon became betrothed to his eight-year-old ward, Elizabeth Grey, Viscountess Lisle, and even assumed the title of Viscount Lisle in anticipation of the marriage, only to forfeit it when he married Mary Tudor instead.

Mary Tudor's husband, King Louis XII of France, died suddenly on 1 January 1515, three months after their wedding. Henry VIII dispatched Charles to France to negotiate Queen Mary's return to England. Charles and Mary were secretly in love, and Mary persuaded Charles to defy Henry - the pair married in the small chapel of the Palais de Cluny on 3 March 1515. Naturally, Henry was furious, but eventually the couple were forgiven and were married for 18 years.

either unmarried ladies or provided by helpfully compliant husbands. This makes it very unlikely that he would have formed a romantic attachment with the young wife of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, who was anything but acquiescent in personality and would almost certainly have strongly protested against such an arrangement.

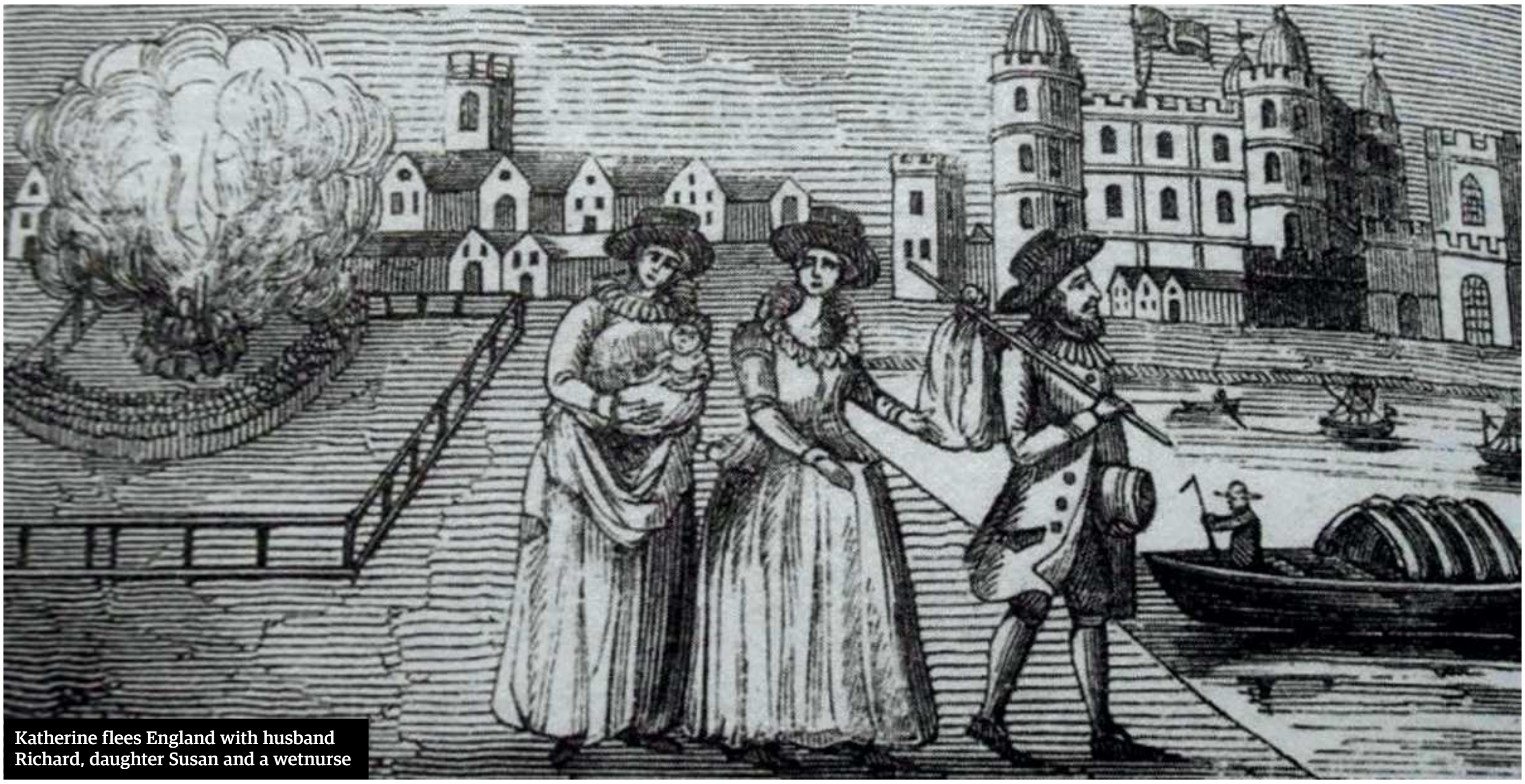
Although they were relatively close in age, Katherine had very little in common with King Henry's fifth wife, Catherine Howard, not least because she had very little time for the Catholic court factions that the new queen represented. Although Katherine had been raised as a Catholic, she had encountered evangelical Protestant literature and its reforming advocates after her marriage and, no doubt to the dismay of her mother, had quickly become intrigued by the New Faith and increasingly dismissive of the hardline Catholics at court. She especially detested Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester – to the extent that she named her pet dog Gardiner after him as it amused her to make him come to heel or beg. Although King Henry's Reformation had removed the authority of the Catholic Church in England, it was still a dangerous time for more radical Protestants, especially those at court like Katherine and her friends, who felt themselves to be under constant surveillance. It was almost certainly at this time that Katherine's friendship with fellow evangelical Catherine Parr blossomed. When Catherine Parr became Henry VIII's sixth wife on 12 July 1543, her great friend Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk was one of the 20 witnesses at the intimate wedding ceremony. The growing friendship between the two women meant that the duchess now found herself in the king's presence even more, which gave him great pleasure. However, although Katherine was obviously extremely intelligent, witty and amusing, she could also be sharp-tongued, short-tempered, opinionated and, on occasion, downright shrewish – qualities that King Henry might tolerate for a while in a mistress but never in a wife. Nonetheless, when Katherine's husband died on 22 August 1545, leaving her an extremely wealthy widow at the age of just 26, rumours quickly began to fly that King Henry was considering casting Catherine Parr aside in order to make the duchess his seventh wife.

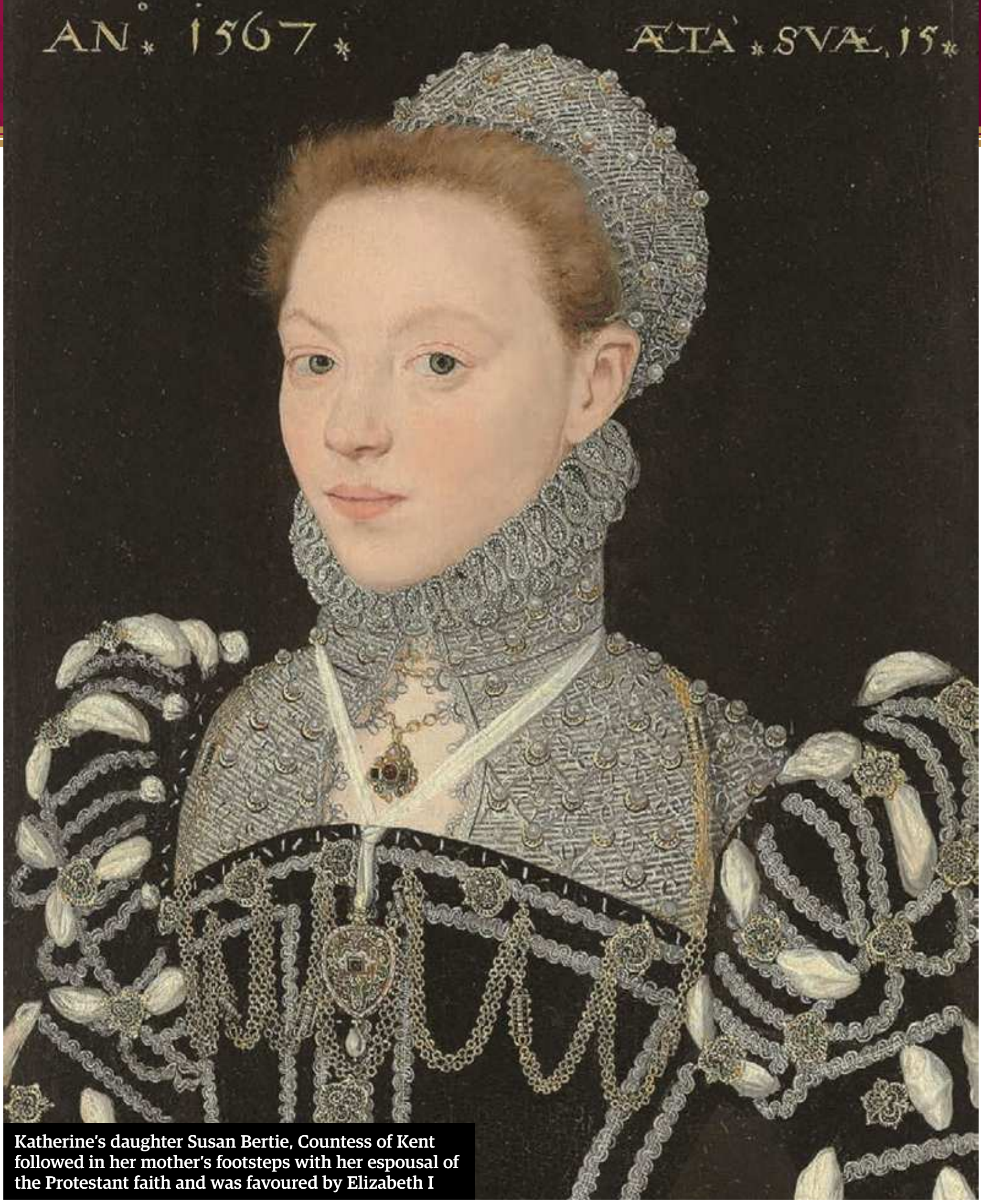
“KATHERINE WAS INTELLIGENT AND WITTY, BUT ALSO SHARP-TONGUED, SHORT-TEMPERED, OPINIONATED AND SHREWISH”


Katherine Willoughby: one of the most attractive, and wealthiest, women at court

Although Catherine Parr had proven herself to be an exemplary wife, a gracious queen and a kind and thoughtful stepmother to Henry's three children, her Protestant sympathies had made her many enemies at court who would have been only too happy to see her removed from power and replaced by someone more receptive to their own conservative Catholic views. However, if that were indeed the case then the opinionated Duchess of Suffolk, who was well known to have strong leanings towards the New Faith and had made no secret of her antipathy towards Bishop Gardiner and other leading Catholics, would hardly be their preferred option.

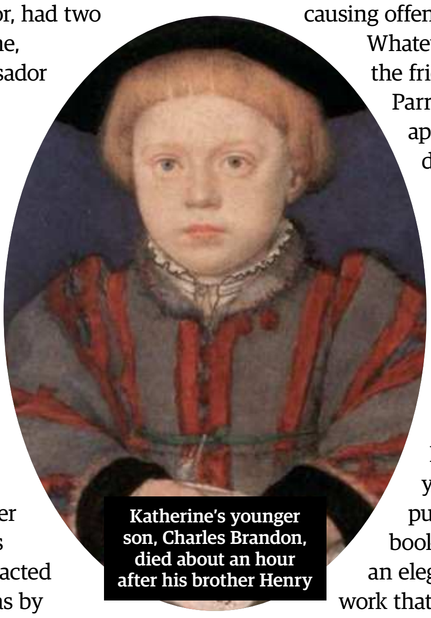
Despite this, when the Catholic faction moved against Catherine Parr in 1546 and attempted to persuade King Henry to have her arrested for heresy, rumours abounded all across Europe that the beautiful Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk was already being lined up as her replacement. The


Katherine flees England with husband Richard, daughter Susan and a wetnurse



Katherine's daughter Susan Bertie, Countess of Kent followed in her mother's footsteps with her espousal of the Protestant faith and was favoured by Elizabeth I

fact that the queen, despite being married three times, had failed to have a child whereas the duchess, seven years her junior, had two healthy sons was cited by some, including the Imperial ambassador François van der Delft, as a reason why King Henry's wandering eye fell upon her. After all, one could never have enough male heirs.



Katherine's younger son, Charles Brandon, died about an hour after his brother Henry

What Katherine thought of all this is unknown but it is unlikely that she regarded the idea of marrying the king with any favour, especially if her elevation came at the price of her good friend's downfall and also put herself in considerable personal danger due to her religious beliefs. It's also unlikely that she was attracted to Henry on a personal level, as by the summer of 1546, the 55-year-old king appeared much older than his years and was a far cry from the handsome, athletic youth he'd once been. Nonetheless, if the rumours that Henry was considering making her his next wife were true, it's unlikely that even Katherine would have risked causing offence by turning him down.

Whatever the truth of the matter, the friendship between Catherine Parr and the Duchess of Suffolk appears to have remained intact despite the rumours that one was being groomed to take the place of the other. When Henry VIII died in January 1547, Katherine was on hand to support her friend and may even have been present a few months later when the dowager queen married Thomas Seymour.

In the November of that same year, Katherine sponsored the publication of Catherine Parr's book *The Lamentation Of A Sinner*, an elegantly written, groundbreaking work that did much to further the reformist cause in England. Sadly, the former queen did not survive for long enough to fully enjoy the success of her work, as she died on 5 September 1548, shortly after giving birth to her daughter, Mary Seymour. When her widower, Lord Seymour, was executed in March 1549, the orphaned Mary, who was just six months old, was entrusted to Katherine's care. Although the duchess had cared deeply for the child's mother, she made no secret of her dismay at having the baby foisted upon her, especially as Mary had been left penniless by the confiscation of her parents' property and was entirely dependent upon Katherine's generosity.

Infuriated by the situation, the duchess, forthright as ever, wrote to the Lord Protector's secretary, Sir William Cecil, to ask for help with meeting Mary's expenses. Cecil did his best to help but as Mary Seymour almost certainly died at some point before her third birthday, it's unlikely that she was a part of Katherine's household for long enough for any assistance to be required. This minor calamity, the unmourned death of an unwanted child, paled into insignificance on 14 July 1551 when both of Katherine's sons, who were studying together at Cambridge, died of sweating sickness on the same day, leaving her distraught. Katherine reacted by examining her faith, which emerged stronger than ever.

> "IT'S UNLIKELY THAT KATHERINE WOULD HAVE RISKED OFFENCE BY TURNING DOWN THE KING'S PROPOSAL"

In 1553, she married Richard Bertie, her master of the horse, who came from a relatively humble background and was certainly considered to be a highly unusual if not inappropriate match for a dowager duchess. However, Bertie not only shared Katherine's religious beliefs but was also well educated, with a degree from Oxford and a talent for languages. Their first child, Susan, was born in 1554 but by the time her brother, Peregrine, arrived a year later, the family had left England and, along with hundreds of other so-called Marian Exiles, settled on the Continent in the wake of Mary I's accession to the throne. Although Katherine had been friendly with Mary during her youth at court, she knew that this connection would not be enough to save her from imprisonment and perhaps even execution should the new queen step up her persecution of Protestants. The Bertie family remained overseas, primarily in Germany and Poland, until Elizabeth I succeeded her sister in 1558. They returned and settled at Katherine's Grimsthorpe estate, where the duchess, formidable until the very end, died on 19 September 1580 at the age of 61.

THE MISTRESSES

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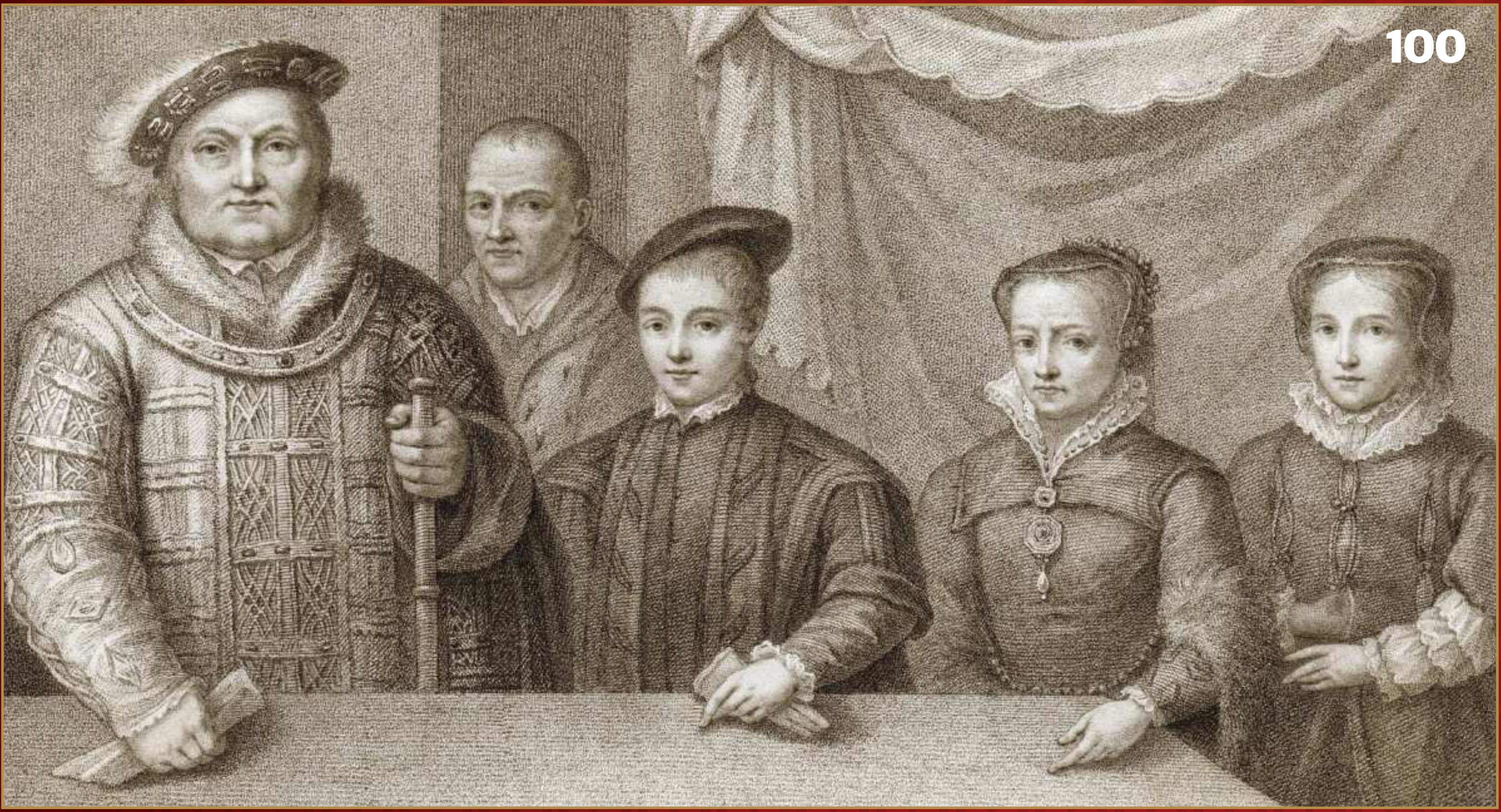

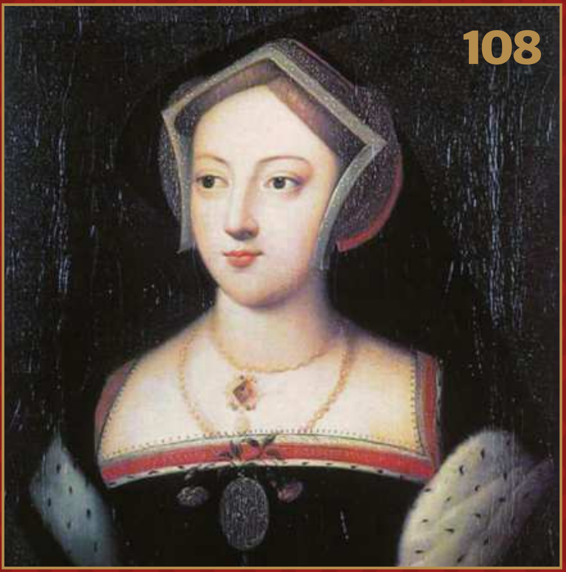

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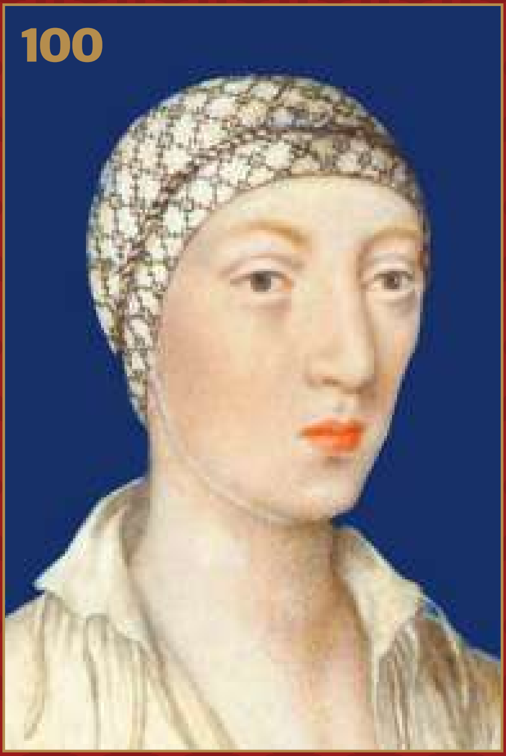

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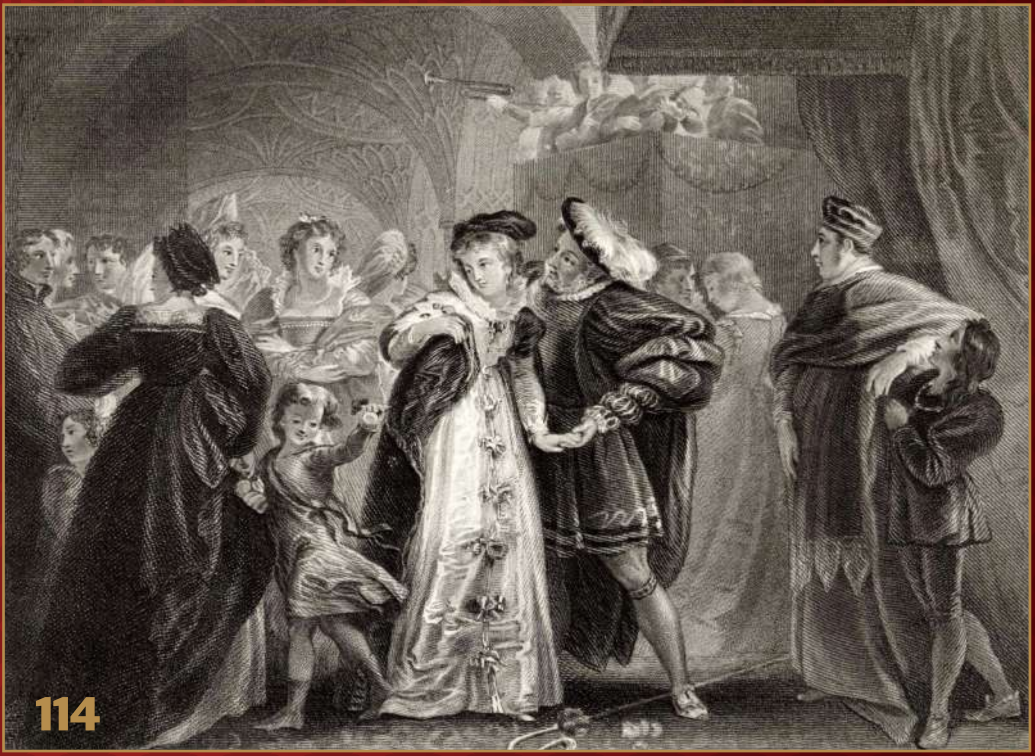

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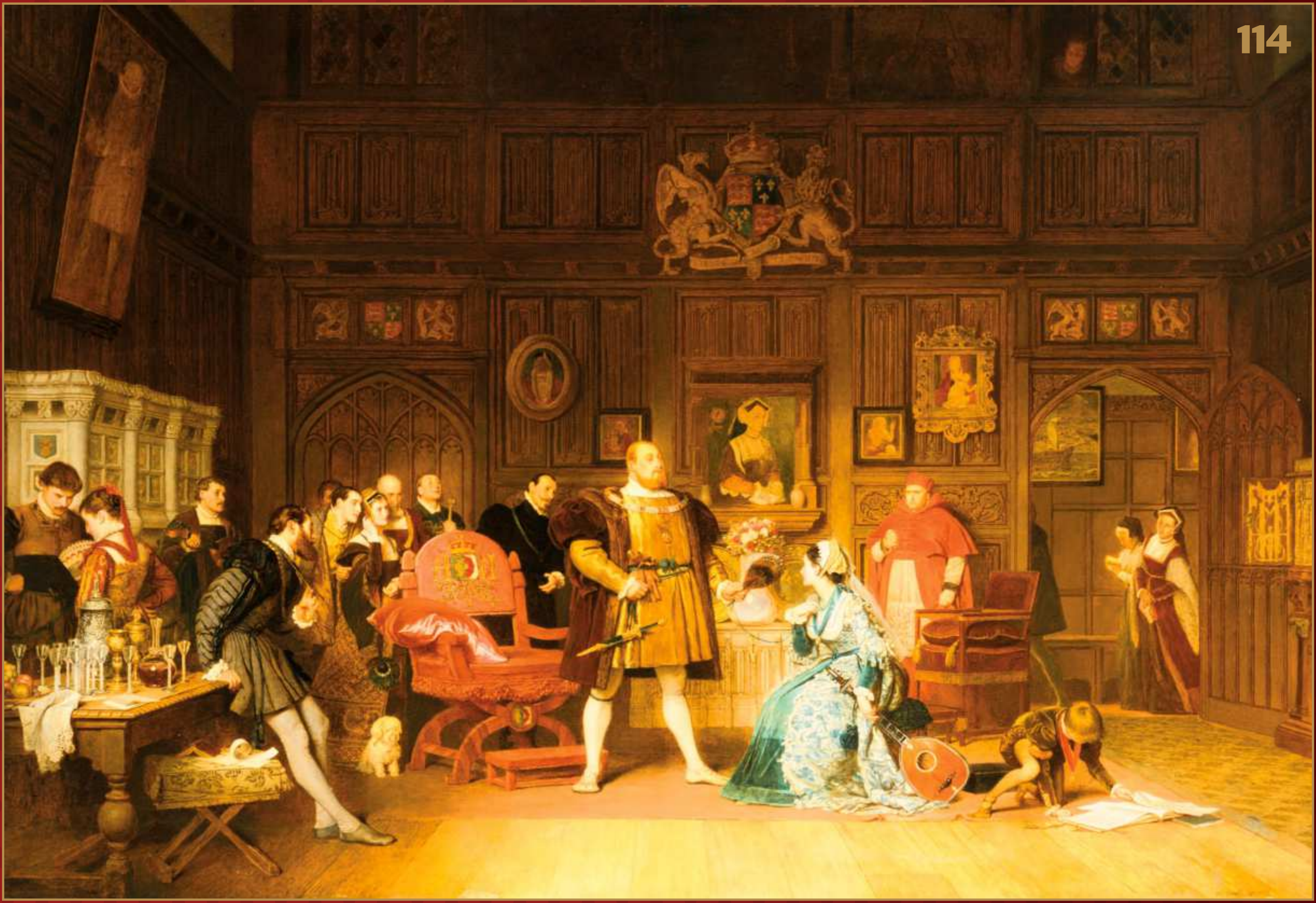
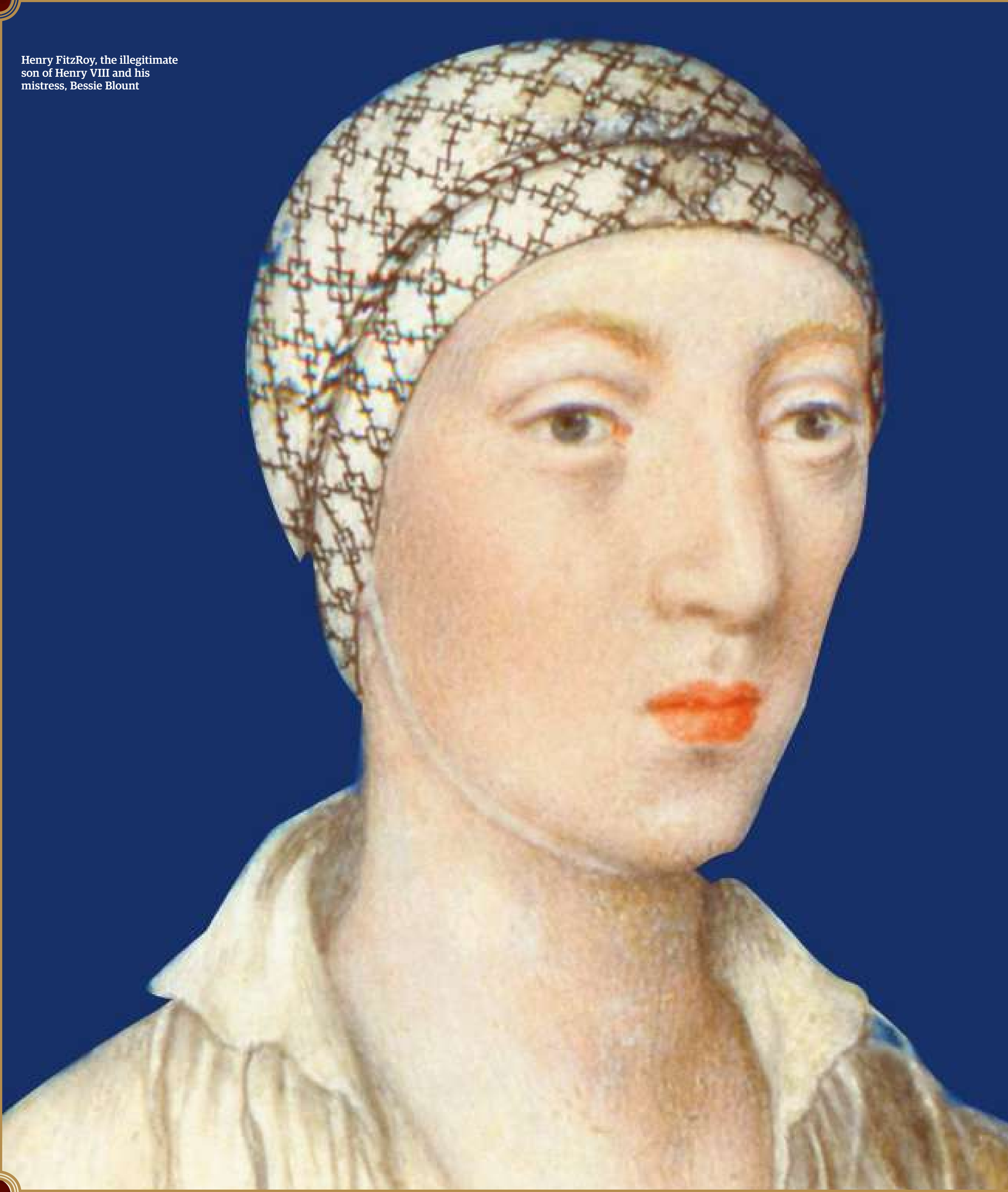




Henry FitzRoy, the illegitimate son of Henry VIII and his mistress, Bessie Blount

BESSIE AND THE BASTARD

As a man with six wives, it's hardly surprising that Henry VIII also had many mistresses. But only one bore him a child who he would recognise as his own

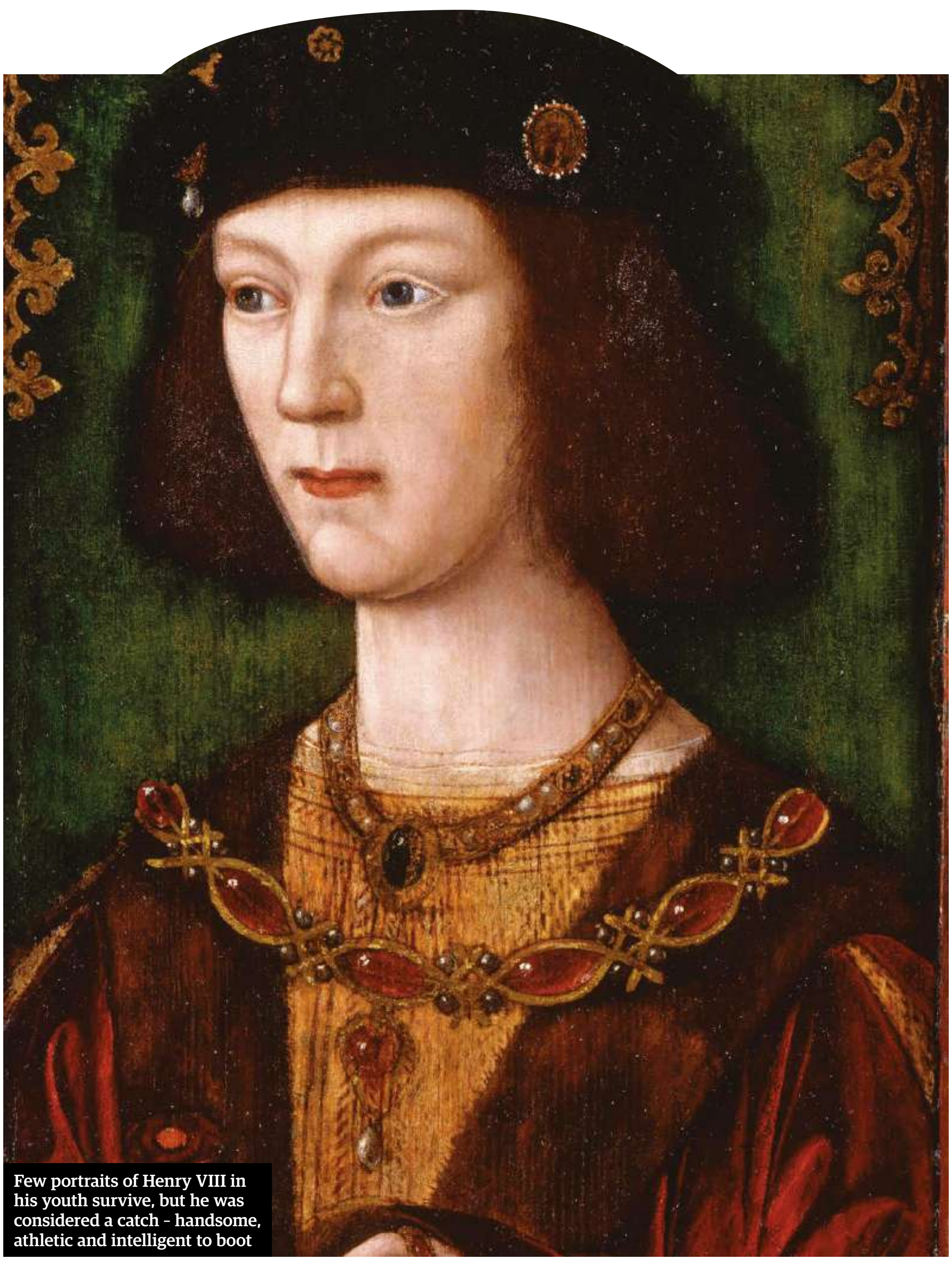
Written by Alicea Francis

Henry VIII was only 17 when he was crowned king of England in June 1509. Today, when we think of this infamous monarch, we often picture him in his later years: a man displaying the effects of a lifetime of overindulgence; sickly, obese and depressed. But the man who processed through Westminster Abbey that hot summer's day bore little resemblance to the man he would become. In his golden coat, velvet robe and ruby collar, Henry's 'Divine Right' looked well-earned, and statesman Thomas More remarked that: "Among a thousand noble companions, the king stands out the tallest, and his strength fits his majestic body. There is fiery power in his eyes, beauty in his face, and the colour of twin roses in his cheeks."

Though it's never sensible to trust a contemporary description of an Early Modern monarch - especially not one written by his own secretary and right-hand man - we do know that Henry was well educated, spoke several languages and was a talented musician. He excelled at sports, jousting and hunting being his preferred pastimes, and was partial to a masquerade ball, where he was always first onto the dance floor. It's fair to say that he was quite the catch.

Sadly for the many single ladies at his court, Henry had married Spanish princess Catherine of Aragon just two weeks before his coronation. Catherine was the widow of his older brother Arthur, who had died several years previously. Following his father's death in April 1509, Henry announced it had been the king's final wish for him to marry his brother's widow, and though there were some concerns over the legality of the marriage - particularly among ecclesiastics - Catherine insisted that her marriage to Arthur had never been consummated. She was also the popular choice both among courtiers and the common people; as the daughter of one of Europe's most powerful monarchs, the union would provide a useful alliance. She had been trained for the role of queen consort since birth, and although six years Henry's senior, she was considered attractive, with fair skin and auburn hair. Most importantly, she was slightly plump - a sure sign of fertility.

“BESSIE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN WELL READ – SHE OWNED BOOKS BOTH IN LATIN AND ENGLISH”



Few portraits of Henry VIII in his youth survive, but he was considered a catch - handsome, athletic and intelligent to boot

Catherine would prove to be a devoted wife to the man who had rescued her from a miserable widowhood. Henry, too, seemed smitten. In a letter to his father-in-law, he wrote: “My wife and I be in good and perfect love as any two creatures can be.” The pair settled happily into court life, enjoying hawking, riding and dancing. And to the king’s delight, in August Catherine announced that she was expecting her first child. However, tragedy struck in January 1510, when the queen suffered a miscarriage of her baby girl. It’s perhaps no coincidence that just a few months later, the first rumours of a royal affair began to swirl.

The woman concerned was one Lady Anne Stafford. On 28 May 1510, the Spanish ambassador Don Luis Caroz reported:

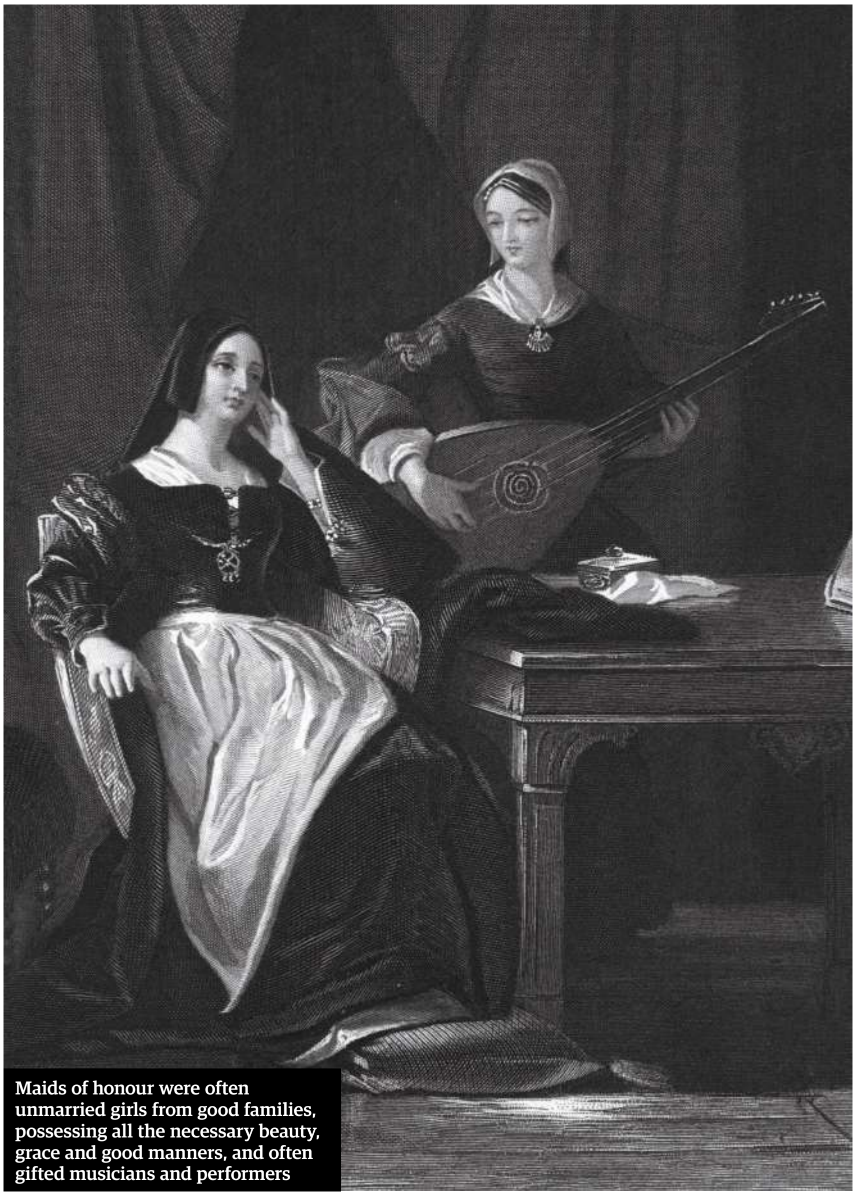
> *“What lately has happened is that two sisters of the Duke of Buckingham, both married, lived in the palace. The one of them is the favourite of the Queen, and the other, it is said, is much liked by the King, who went after her. [Upon their discovery], the husband of that lady went away, carried her off, and placed her in a convent sixty miles from here, that no one may see her. The King having understood that all this proceeded from the sister, who is the favourite of the Queen, the day after the one was gone, turned the other out of the palace, and her husband with her. Believing that there were other women in the employment of the favourite, that is to say, such as go about the palace insidiously spying out every unwatched moment, in order to tell the Queen [stories], the King would have liked to turn all of them out, only that it has appeared to him too great a scandal. Afterwards, almost all the court knew that the Queen had been vexed with the King, and the King with her, and thus this storm went on between them.”*

Anne eventually returned to court, and it is not known whether the affair continued. At New Year in 1513, the king gave her 30 ounces of silver gilt – the third-most expensive present he bestowed that year. But in public, at least, he continued to give the impression of being happily married. Just a few months after her miscarriage, Catherine fell pregnant again and a much-longed-for son, Henry, Duke of Cornwall, was born on 1 January 1511. To mark the occasion, guns were fired from the Tower of London, the city bells were rung, beacons were lit and free wine was distributed among the people. Five days after his birth, the prince was christened at Richmond Palace, and the king requested that the initials ‘H’ and ‘K’ be sown on his clothes in honour of his wife. However, on 22 February 1511, after only 52 days of life, the young prince died.

Two more years passed without the birth of an heir, and Henry’s frustration was becoming greater by the day. If he couldn’t prove his manhood in the home, he would have to do it on the battlefield. An invasion of France seemed like the most sensible option. After all, England had been embroiled in conflict with its European neighbour for centuries, and Henry was determined to win back the kingdom of Aquitaine, thus securing from the pope the promised title of ‘Most Christian King of France’. In June 1513, he led an invasion and defeated the French army at the Battle of the Spurs. But the rest of the campaign was an embarrassing failure, and he managed to conquer only two significant towns.

Meanwhile, the now-once-again-pregnant Catherine had been left to rule as ‘Governor of the Realm’, and though the council had never taken orders from a woman before, she coped admirably. Once a week, she sent Henry a letter informing him of matters of state and conveying her ongoing devotion to him, writing: “I am never in rest until I see letters from you”. But Catherine soon got the distraction she was looking for.

While no portraits survive of Bessie Blount, this memorial brass provides an idea of how she looked



Maids of honour were often unmarried girls from good families, possessing all the necessary beauty, grace and good manners, and often gifted musicians and performers

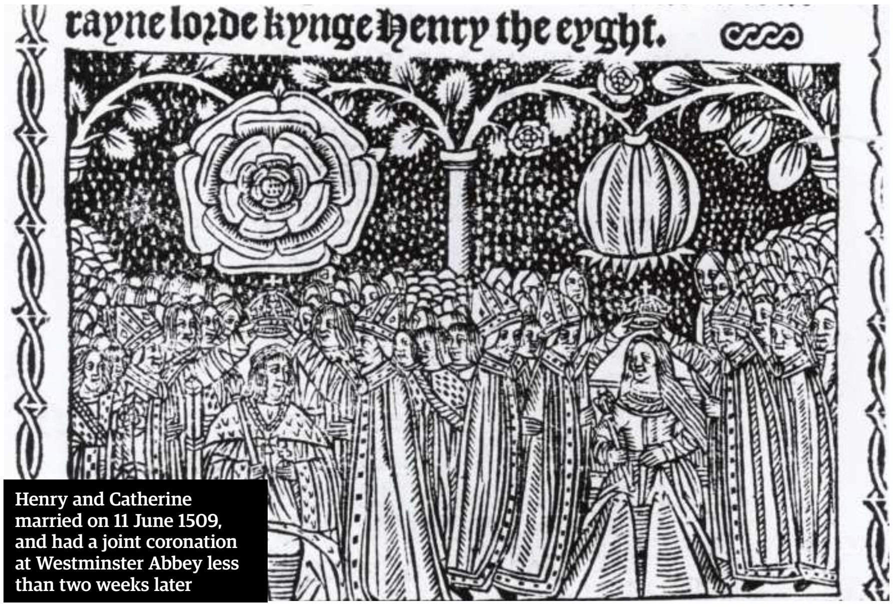
Not long after Henry VIII departed for France, the Scottish forces saw an opportunity and invaded the north of England. Catherine was forced to step up as high commander, and in September 1513, she ordered Thomas Lovell to raise an army in the midland counties. Here, Catherine rode up north in full armour to address the troops, and made a fine speech before what would become known as the Battle of Flodden Field. Her troops were victorious, and King James IV of Scotland was killed. Triumphant, she sent a piece of his bloodied coat across the Channel to her beloved.

But neither this gesture, nor her weekly letters, could change how Henry felt about his wife, and her victory only served to amplify his own defeat. Catherine's father Ferdinand – the king of Spain – had promised to provide Henry's army with assistance in the French campaign, but instead had used the conflict to further his own gains. While Henry had paid out of his own pocket to support the Spanish, he had received little in return, and the royal coffers were almost empty. King Henry was humiliated, and he blamed Catherine – after all, it had been her who had convinced him to trust her father. Then, to make matters worse, in November she went into labour prematurely and gave birth to a stillborn son.

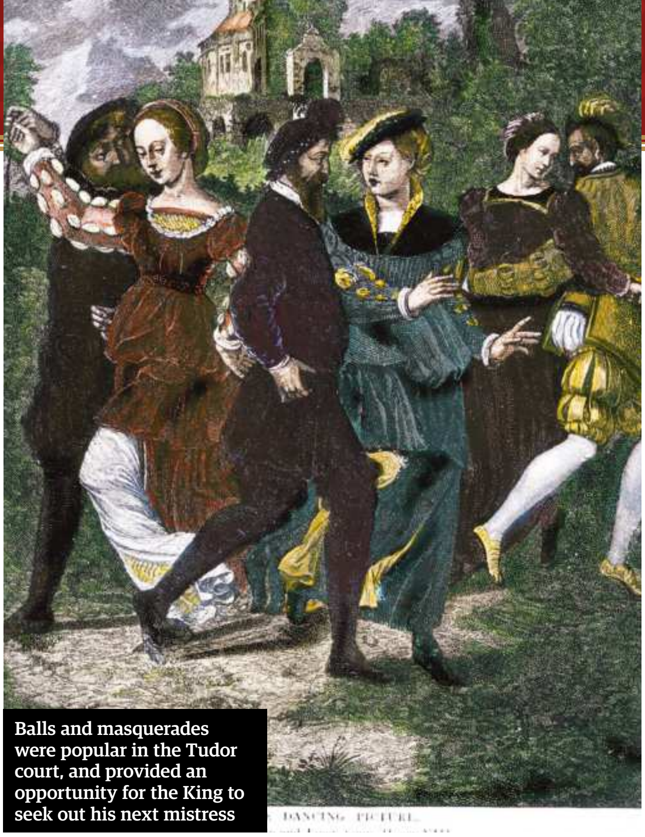
Reeling from the embarrassment, Henry spent much of his time in France with the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian and his sister Margaret. Among Margaret's maids of honour was a Flemish woman named Etiennette. Being far away from his wife and fuelled by the adrenaline of war, the rumours of Henry's infidelity during this time can easily be believed. Some evidence for it lies in a letter that was sent to him by Etiennette the following year, in which she informed him that she was due to marry and reminded him that he had promised her 10,000 crowns as a gift – perhaps in return for the loss of her virtue. One contemporary source stated that in 1514, Henry, "for love of a lady, clad himself and the court in mourning". Etiennette's betrothal could well have been the cause.

In June 1514, Catherine announced her fourth pregnancy. On Henry's suit of armour from that year, now on display in the Tower of London, you can see love knots with 'H' and 'K' decorating the metal, and their initials were also entwined on candlesticks, cups, basins and salt cellars. But it was also that year that Catherine lost much of her political influence to Wolsey. Henry supposedly began boasting about his infidelity in public and was linked to three separate ladies of the court, while the first whisperings of an annulment reverberated around the palace. Catherine's miscarriages and the wrongdoings of King Ferdinand were clearly taking their toll. Almost inevitably, in January 1515, Catherine gave birth to a stillborn boy. The diagnosis was stress.

While Catherine was pregnant, she had been unable to participate in any dancing or festivities,


rayne lorde kynge Henry the eyght.

Henry and Catherine married on 11 June 1509, and had a joint coronation at Westminster Abbey less than two weeks later



Balls and masquerades were popular in the Tudor court, and provided an opportunity for the King to seek out his next mistress

> "IF HIS AFFAIR WITH BESSIE HADN'T ALREADY BEGUN, IT'S LIKELY THAT THIS WAS THE YEAR THAT IT DID"

so at Christmas 1514, Henry chose someone else to dance. Tradition dictated that he should ask the next-highest-ranking lady, but instead he asked Elizabeth 'Bessie' Blount – one of Catherine's maids of honour. Lord Herbert of Cherbury described her as being "eloquent, gracious and beautiful" and "was thought, for her rare ornaments of nature and education, to be the beauty and mistress-piece of her time". She was, however, only around 14 years old. In an age where poor diet delayed the onset of puberty, this was young, but not too young to have a relationship with a man.

Bessie had been born in Kinlet, Shropshire circa 1500, the eldest daughter of 11 children born to Sir John Blount and his wife Katherine, whose father had fought for Henry VII at the Battle of Bosworth. Though members of the gentry, her family was not aristocratic, and with so many brothers, Bessie was unlikely to receive much inheritance. She knew, therefore, that she would have to marry into wealth to sustain herself in later life. From a young age, Bessie's mother taught her to write as well as needlework, dancing and singing – skills she would need to secure herself a place at court and improve her chances of wooing an eligible bachelor. There are two surviving depictions that could possibly be of Bessie – one on her parents' tomb, which shows a girl with downturned eyes and a serene expression; and one on a funeral brass, in which the model wears a fashionable French hood. A portrait of her brother George tells us that he had fair skin, blonde hair and blue eyes. If these were traits that Bessie shared, she would have been considered the epitome of Tudor beauty.

Her family's involvement in the royal court began when Prince Arthur and a young Catherine took up residence in Ludlow Castle, Shropshire in 1501. Arthur died the following year, and both Bessie's grandfather and great-grandfather played roles at his funeral. She was probably also present herself. Bessie's father was appointed esquire of the body at Henry VII's funeral seven years later and by the time of Henry VIII's coronation, he had been appointed one of the King's Spears, acting in both a ceremonial and protective role. However, it was probably William Blount, Lord of Mountjoy – a distant kinsman of the Blounts of Kinlet, who had been a trustee of the marriage settlement between Bessie's parents – who secured her a place at court as maid of honour to Catherine of Aragon. He had been appointed the queen's chamberlain in May 1512, and sought to advance the Blount family where he could.

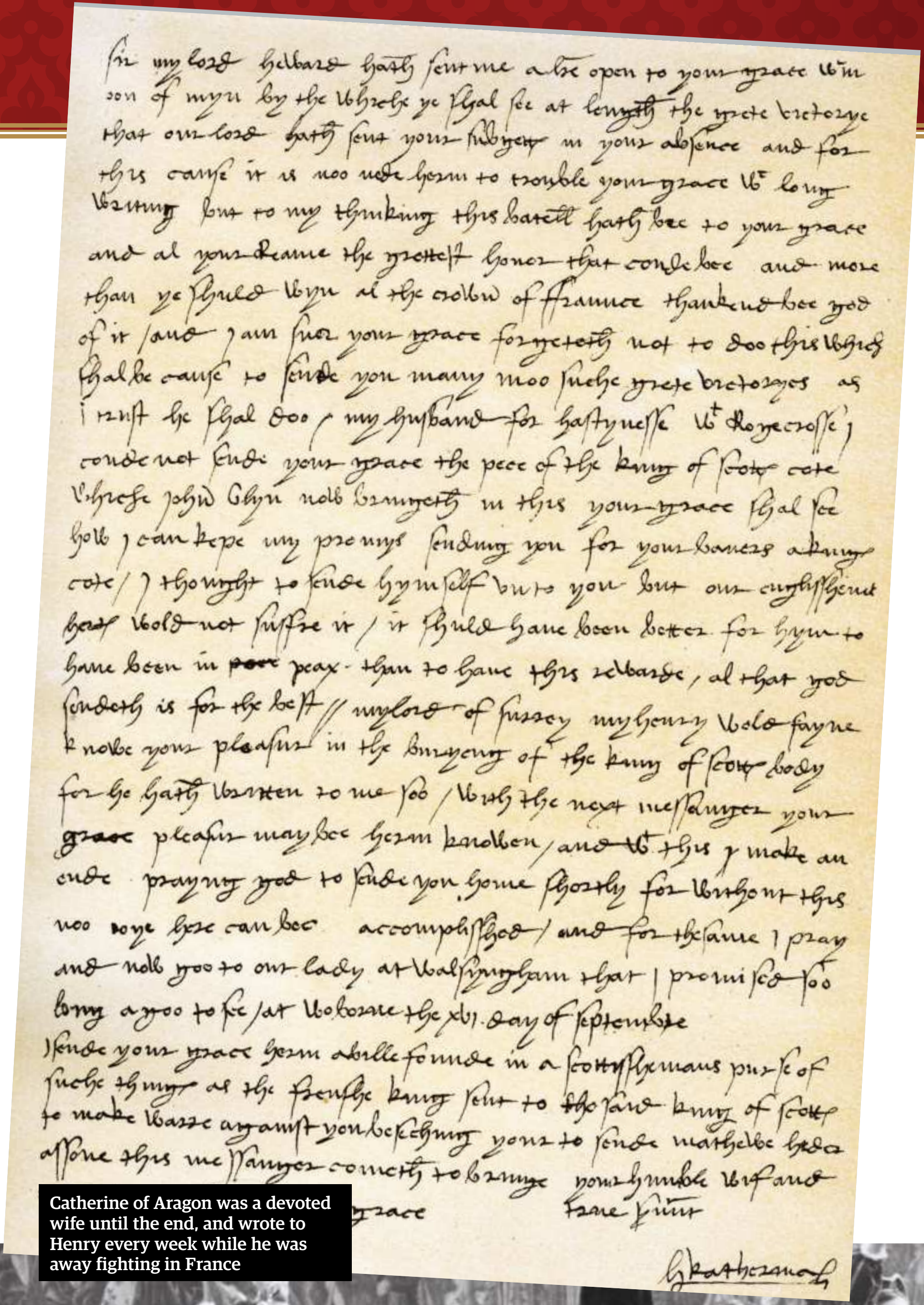
On 8 May 1513, court records show that Bessie received 100 shillings for the previous year's wages – half that of maid of honour, suggesting that she began her career in a minor position. On 29 September, she was included in a list of "years wages due at Michaelmas", receiving 200 shillings. This means that she must have been promoted to the ranks of maid of honour by at least 29 September 1512, when she was around 12 years old.

Her role was to "ensure the quiet rest and comfort of [her] mistress, and the preservation of her health". As Catherine's attendant, she would have spent her time sewing and completing other menial tasks, such as serving meals, or at prayer. She would also have been expected to continue her education. Bessie seems to have been well read – she owned poetry books both in Latin and English. Even though much of her day would have been spent at work, she would have also been invited to go hunting or hawking and attend masquerades and feasts.

Bessie excelled in the pageantry of court. One contemporary wrote that her gift in singing and dancing helped her to capture the king's heart. The first evidence of Bessie being on Henry's radar came in October 1514, when Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, wrote to him: "I beseech your grace to tell Mistress Blount and Mistress Carew the next time that I write unto them or send them tokens they shall either write to me or send me tokens again." At the Christmas masquerade that year, when she was partnered with Henry, Bessie was one of just eight chosen to participate, proving that she was already making waves in the royal court.

Meanwhile, the secretary to the Venetian ambassador reported that Catherine was "rather ugly than otherwise, and supposed to be pregnant, but the damsels of her court are handsome, and make a sumptuous appearance". Following the stillbirth in January, Catherine managed to conceive again and this time gave birth to a healthy child on 18 February 1516. Unfortunately, the child was a girl, who they named Mary. Henry could not hide his disappointment, but was reassured by his advisors – if it were a girl this time, then surely boys would follow.

Of course, we know now that this would not be the case. In 1517, Catherine suffered another



ſir my lord howard hath ſent me a lre open to your grace wtin
one of myn by the whiche ye ſhal ſee at length the grete victorye
that our lord hath ſent your ſubjects in your abſence and for
this cauſe it is noo nede herin to trouble your grace wt long
writing but to my thinking this batell hath bee to your grace
and al your reame the grettest honor that coulde bee and more
than ye ſhulde wyn al the crown of ffraunce thanked bee god
of it / and I am ſure your grace forgeteth not to doo this which
ſhalbe cauſe to ſende you many moo ſuche grete victoryes as
I truſt he ſhal doo / my huſband for haſtyneſſe wt Rogecroſſe I
coude not ſende your grace the pece of the king of ſcotts cote
whiche John Glyn now bringeth in this your grace ſhal ſee
how I can kepe my promys ſending you for your baners a kings
cote / I thought to ſende hymſelf unto you but our engliſſhemens
herts wold not ſuffre it / it ſhulde have been better for hym to
have been in ~~pece~~ peax than to have this rewarde, al that god
ſendeth is for the beſt // my lord of ſurrey my henry wolde fayne
knowe your pleaſur in the buryeng of the king of ſcotts body
for he hath writen to me ſoo / with the next meſſanger your
grace pleaſur may bee herin knowen / and wt this I make an
ende praying god to ſende you home ſhortly for without this
noo joye here can bee accompliſſhed / and for the ſame I pray
and now goo to our lady at walſyngham that I promiſed ſoo
long agoo to ſee / at woborne the xvi. day of ſeptembre
I ſende your grace herin a bille founde in a ſcottiſſhemans purſe of
ſuche things as the frenſhe king ſent to ~~the~~ ſaid king of ſcotts
to make warre againſt you beſeching you to ſende mathew hider
aſſone this meſſanger cometh to bringe your humble wif and
grace true ſervant

Katherina

Catherine of Aragon was a devoted wife until the end, and wrote to Henry every week while he was away fighting in France

Henry's mistress Bessie Blount was renowned for her skill in music and dancing, and was a frequent player in court masques

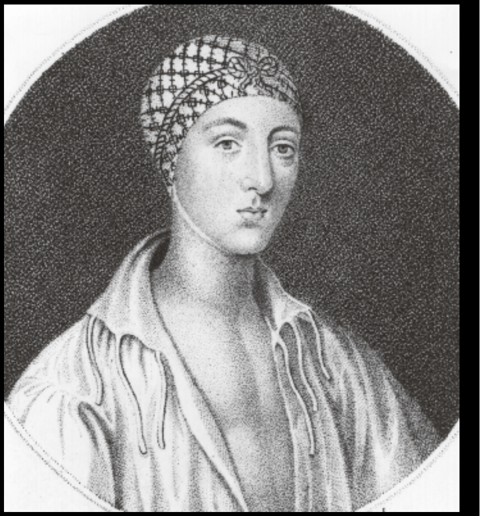
THE BOY WHO WOULD BE KING?

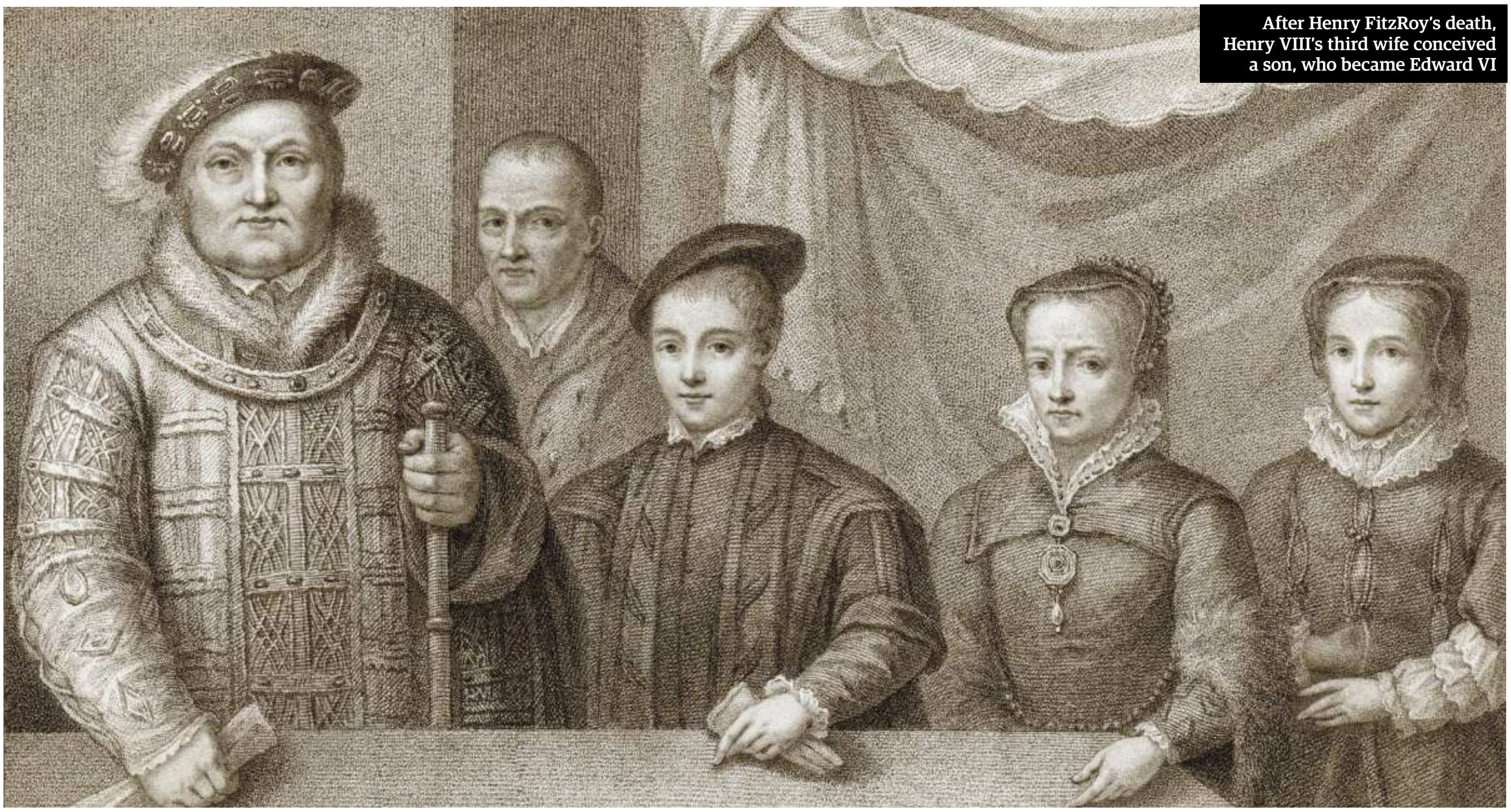
The only illegitimate child to be acknowledged by Henry VIII, the debate continues as to whether FitzRoy was the intended heir

Henry FitzRoy was raised in comfort and luxury, almost as if he were a prince of the blood and not a bastard born of a lowly mistress. But if a policy of discretion had been employed during the first few years of his life, by the time FitzRoy turned six this had been abandoned. In 1525, he was granted his own residence in London and on 18 June – possibly his birthday – he was brought to Bridewell Palace. There, during an elaborate ceremony, attended by his father, he was made Earl of Nottingham and Duke of Richmond and Somerset. It was the first time since the 12th century that an illegitimate child had been raised to the peerage.

After he turned 14, Richmond, as he became known, married Lady Mary Howard – the daughter of the king's favourite Thomas Howard. But just three years later, he was reported ill with consumption and died at St James's Palace on 23 July 1536.

At the time of his death, an act was going through Parliament which disinherited Henry's daughter by Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth, as heir, and permitted the king to designate his successor, whether legitimate or not. Could it be that Henry had intended to make his bastard child the heir to the English throne? We will never know.





After Henry FitzRoy's death, Henry VIII's third wife conceived a son, who became Edward VI

THE OTHER WOMEN

Extramarital affairs have historically been an almost-inevitable part of royal life

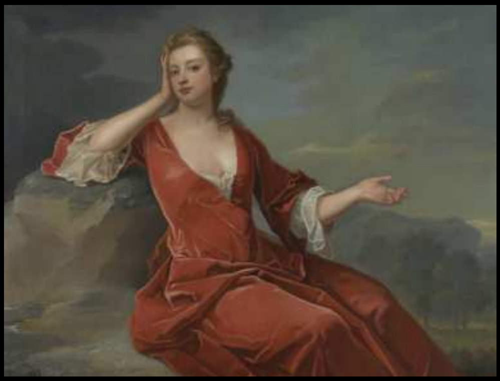
Royal mistresses have existed since the dawn of monarchy itself. With so many marriages built on political rather than romantic considerations, monarchs often found themselves in loveless relationships, and mistresses offered them a chance to explore their own sexual preferences.

But beyond merely a physical relationship, mistresses often wielded extraordinary power. Many families actually vied for their daughters to become a king's lover, as there were great benefits to having a member of the family as a mistress. Though queens often chose to turn a blind eye, affairs could also be the cause of a great deal of friction, especially when they were being conducted by the queens' own ladies in waiting.

In the last century, Edward VII, son of Queen Victoria, was infamous for his affairs while married to his wife Alexandra, who was not only aware of them but also accepted them.

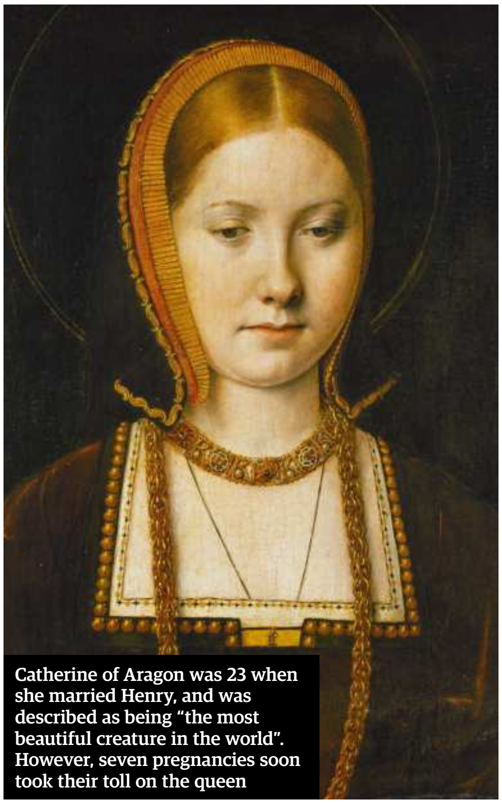
Of course, in recent decades, members of the royal family have been less tolerant of infidelity – most famously Prince Charles and Diana. Having been forbidden from marrying his true love, Charles was determined that the same fate would not befall his two sons, and they were both encouraged to marry for love.

Alexandra was accepting of Edward VII's infidelities throughout their marriage



Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, rose to influence through her friendship with Queen Anne

The tradition of the royal mistress continued with Prince Charles's affair with Camilla Parker Bowles



Catherine of Aragon was 23 when she married Henry, and was described as being "the most beautiful creature in the world". However, seven pregnancies soon took their toll on the queen

miscarriage. The following year, she announced her seventh pregnancy, and on 10 November she gave birth. Not only was the child another girl, she was also sickly, and she died just a few days later. This would prove to be her final pregnancy, as shortly after, Catherine fell victim to early menopause. All hope of providing her husband with his much-longed-for male heir was lost.

Henry was now well aware that he would have to find alternative solutions. If his affair with Bessie hadn't already begun, it's likely that this was the year that it did. In 1517, Bessie's father John was appointed one of the king's esquires of the body, suggesting that something had caused her family to rise in prominence. Bessie continued to appear regularly in court masques until October 1518. But it's not until the spring of 1519 that we hear of her again, when she's reported of having left court to go and live in a house called Jericho in Blackmore, Essex, which the king had leased. Henry made frequent visits there and around this time, had Newhall Boreham built nearby. His closest servants were warned "not to enquire where the King is or goeth, be it early or late".

In June 1519, much to Henry's delight, Bessie gave birth to a son. She named him Henry and he was bestowed him with the Anglo-Norman surname 'FitzRoy', meaning 'son of a king', which had been used by several rulers of England for their illegitimate children.

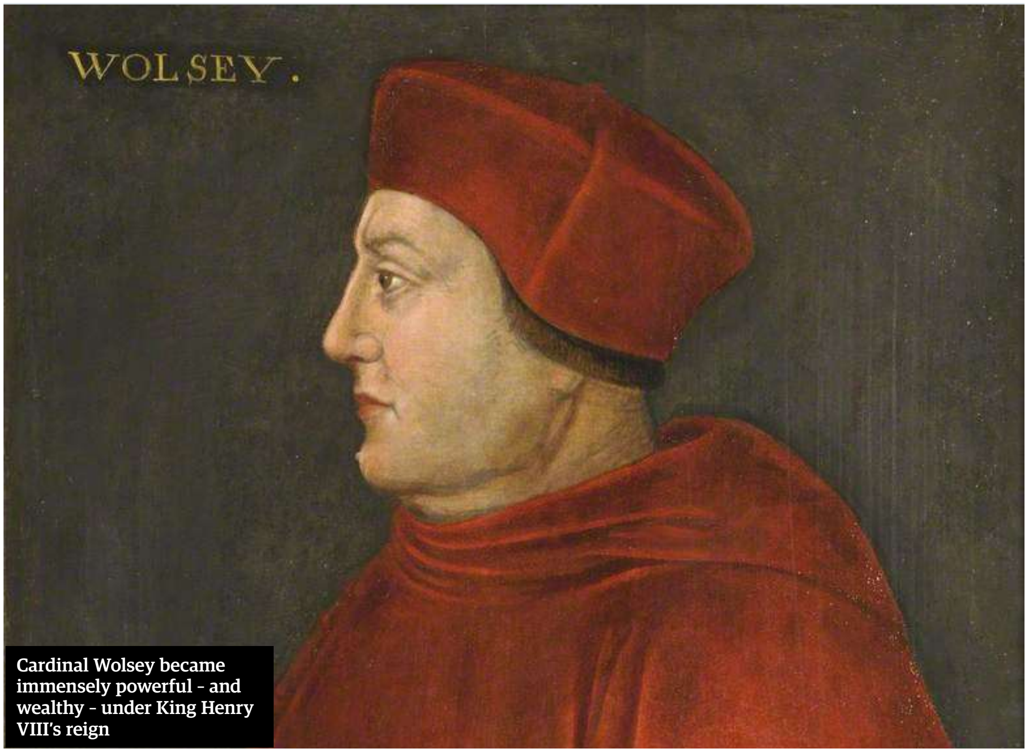
Cardinal Wolsey was appointed the boy's godfather. Henry stayed at two of his nearby properties that summer, Havering-atte-Bowe in August and Beaulieu in September, so it's likely he made time to visit his newborn son. Whether Catherine was aware of the situation at that time, we do not know, but the birth certainly caused no great stir, and diplomatic dispatches made no record of it.

We also know very little about the next few years of Bessie and her young son's life. It was not uncommon at that time for a king to arrange for one of his mistresses to marry once their relationship was over. Unfortunately, we have no record to determine when exactly Bessie married her husband, Gilbert Tailboys. Tailboys was a member of Wolsey's household and the Cardinal may have arranged the match. The first reference to her as 'Lady Tailboys' is in 1522, when Henry FitzRoy was three years old. It's possible that this was the year when she married, suggesting that Bessie and Henry's relationship continued after the birth of their son. However, Bessie and Gilbert's eldest daughter, Elizabeth, was recorded as being 22 in 1542, which means that she was conceived in either 1519 or 1520. Either the pair married earlier, and there is no record of it, or their daughter was fathered by another man. Could Henry have had a second illegitimate child with Bessie?

It was in 1522 that Henry spoke to the Bishop of Lincoln about annulling his marriage to Catherine. It was also the year that William Carey, the husband of his most famous mistress, Mary Boleyn, began to get grants from the king. Bessie had finally been replaced in his affections. After her marriage, Bessie does not feature much in the official records, but we know that she went on to have two more children with Tailboys. A passing comment was made about her in 1529, when a palace chaplain remarked that she was better-looking than Anne Boleyn. After Tailboys died in 1530, Bessie was left a widow of comfortable means, and she remarried several years later, bearing three more daughters. For a short time, she served Anne of Cleves as a lady-in-waiting, but died in 1540 – the same year that Anne's marriage to Henry was dissolved.

On the face of things, Bessie's affair with Henry VIII may seem inconsequential – after all, hers and King Henry's illegitimate son Henry FitzRoy died in 1536, aged 17, having never been declared eligible for the throne. But by birthing Henry a son, she had proved that it was Catherine, and not the king, who was to blame for the lack of a male heir. Perhaps, without this peace of mind, Henry would never have been able to justify an annulment. He would never have married Anne Boleyn, England would never have broken with Rome, and the course of history would have been very different indeed.

"By birthing Henry a son, she had proved that it was Catherine who was to blame for the lack of a male heir"



Cardinal Wolsey became immensely powerful – and wealthy – under King Henry VIII's reign

© Getty; Alamy; WIKI

BATTLE FOR THE BEDCHAMBER

Groomed for greatness, find out how Mary Boleyn rose through the ranks to become the king's obsession

Written by Elizabeth Norton

Anne Boleyn's death on 19 May 1536 caused a stir across Europe. The death of Mary Boleyn seven years later attracted no notice at all. While the sisters had once followed each other to the royal courts of France and England, their fates were very different indeed. Anne and Mary both captivated Henry VIII, but only one was born to rule.

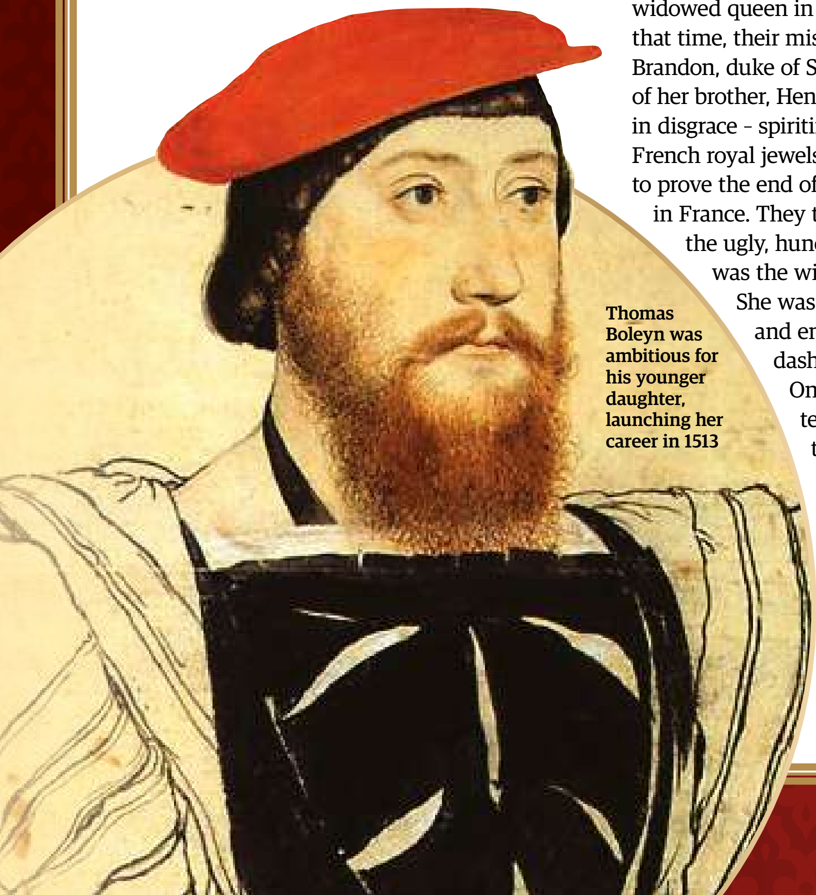
The sisters' births were so insignificant that no record was made of when, or where, they occurred. Mary was probably the eldest, born circa 1499, with her sister following a year or so later. A brother, George, completed the family, who were probably all born in Norfolk, England.

Mary and Anne's father, Sir Thomas Boleyn, was a gentleman, but he was also the descendant of London trade. His paternal grandfather had been a hatter, who became fabulously wealthy and went on to serve as lord mayor of London. He founded the family's fortune. Thomas Boleyn was a courtier, marrying the eldest daughter of the Earl of Surrey (later the second Duke of Norfolk) towards the end of the 15th century. Although (as Thomas later complained), his wife brought him "every year a child," the couple still managed to live in some style, with their children tutored at home at Blickling and, later, Hever Castle in Kent, which Thomas inherited in 1505. The sisters' father was a quick-witted, educated man and renowned as the best French speaker at the English court. He was often sent on diplomatic embassies by Henry VIII, including one to Margaret of Austria, regent of the Netherlands, in 1512. Thomas and Margaret quickly established a rapport, developing such an easy relationship that they made a friendly wager over the likely outcome of the negotiations between Henry VIII and Margaret's father, the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian. The pair were so friendly that Thomas was able to secure the acceptance of one of his daughters into the regent's household. Surprisingly, he chose his youngest daughter - Anne. Mary was, by all accounts, the more attractive of the two sisters, but Thomas evidently saw something else in his younger daughter.

Anne set out for Brussels in the summer of 1513, where she did not disappoint. Margaret wrote personally to Thomas to inform him that his daughter had arrived safely and that she was "of such good address and so pleasing in her youthful age that I am more beholden to you for having sent her to me than you are to me." Anne quickly learned French, the language of Margaret's court, with her first surviving letter - appropriately enough addressed to her father - setting out the progress of her studies. Anne made an immediate impression on Margaret, but her time with the regent was brief. In late 1514 she left Brussels to serve the young English princess, Mary Tudor, when she married Louis XII of France. There, Anne joined her sister, who was one of the ladies-in-waiting that accompanied Queen Mary to her new kingdom. The sisters were among the few English attendants who were permitted to remain after the wedding. While marriage to a beautiful teenager initially invigorated Louis, he was dead within three months. The sisters then joined the

© Joe Cummings

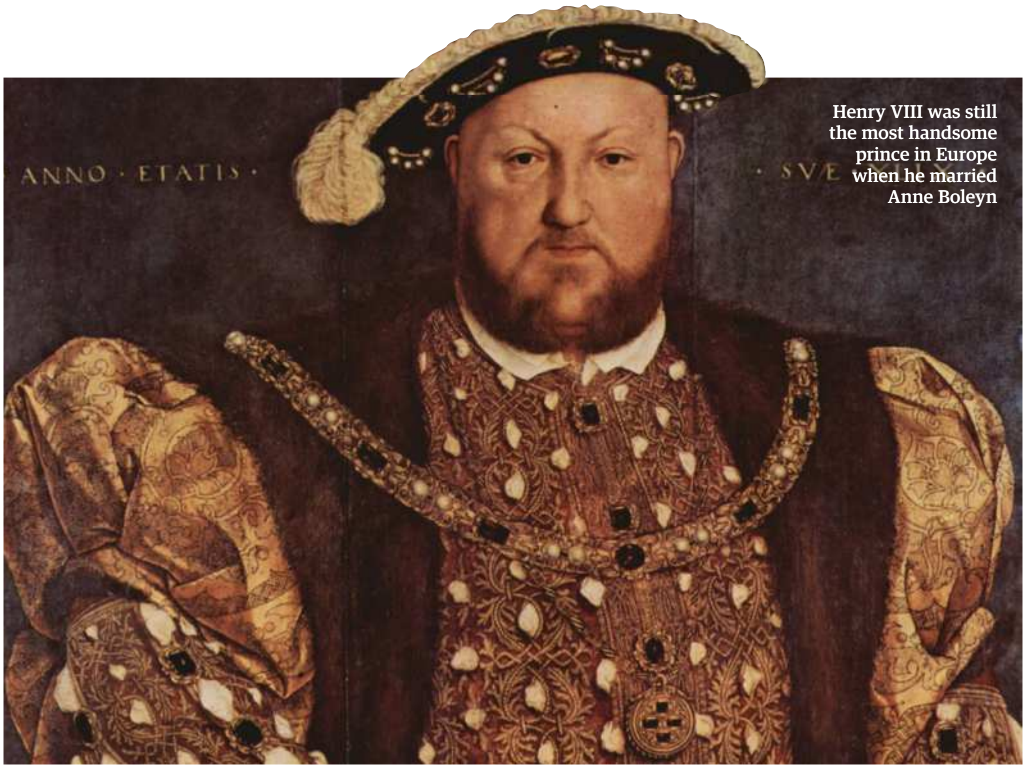
Hever Castle in Kent, the childhood home of the Boleyn sisters



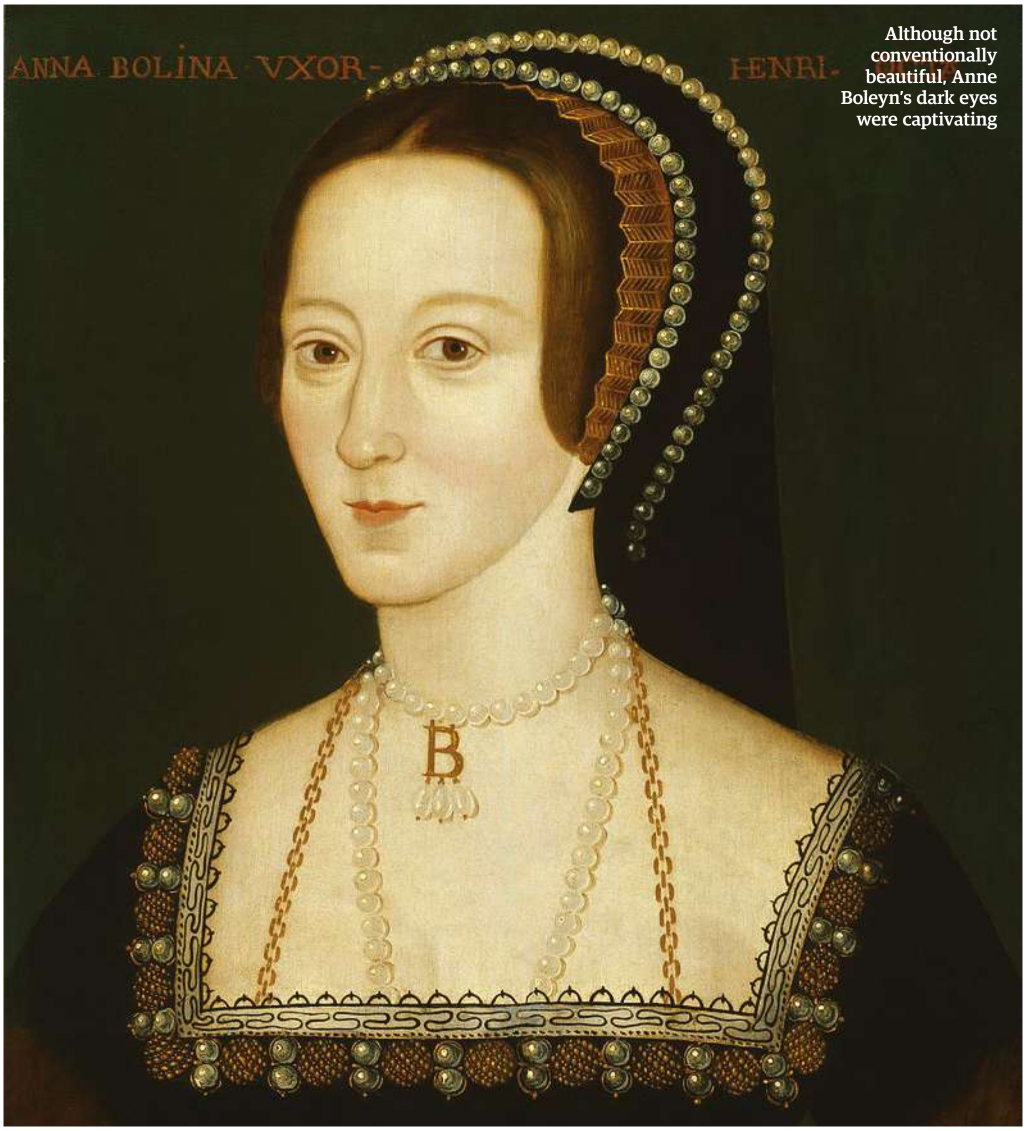
Thomas Boleyn was ambitious for his younger daughter, launching her career in 1513

widowed queen in seclusion at Cluny. During that time, their mistress secretly married Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, the greatest friend of her brother, Henry VIII, and returned home in disgrace – spiriting away some of the finest French royal jewels in the process. This was not to prove the end of Anne and Mary Boleyn's time in France. They transferred to the household of the ugly, hunchbacked Queen Claude, who was the wife of Louis' cousin, Francis I. She was almost permanently pregnant and entirely overshadowed by her dashing, but unfaithful, husband. One brief affair was with the teenaged Mary Boleyn, whom the ungallant Francis would later describe as a "great whore." She was hurried home by her family and, on 4 February 1520, married the courtier William Carey – a solid, but unspectacular match. Mary also secured a place with Henry VIII's wife, Catherine of Aragon, at the English court. Her sister remained in France, becoming French in all but birth.

Mary Boleyn arrived at the English court at roughly the same time Henry VIII was casting an eye around for a new mistress. The English king was still in his youthful prime and renowned as the most handsome prince in Europe. He had also recently fathered a son, Henry Fitzroy, although not with his Spanish queen, Catherine of Aragon, whose last pregnancy had ended in 1518 with a stillbirth. Fitzroy's mother, Elizabeth Blount, was rewarded with marriage to a peer, creating a vacancy in the king's bedchamber. Mary Boleyn was more conventionally beautiful than her sister and had been well-schooled by her mother, the accomplished courtier Elizabeth Howard. It was speculated that Elizabeth herself had been a mistress of the king's, but when Henry VIII was later challenged that he had 'meddled' with both Anne Boleyn's mother and sister, he replied bashfully "never with the mother." With Mary, however, it was a different story.



Henry VIII was still the most handsome prince in Europe when he married Anne Boleyn



Although not conventionally beautiful, Anne Boleyn's dark eyes were captivating

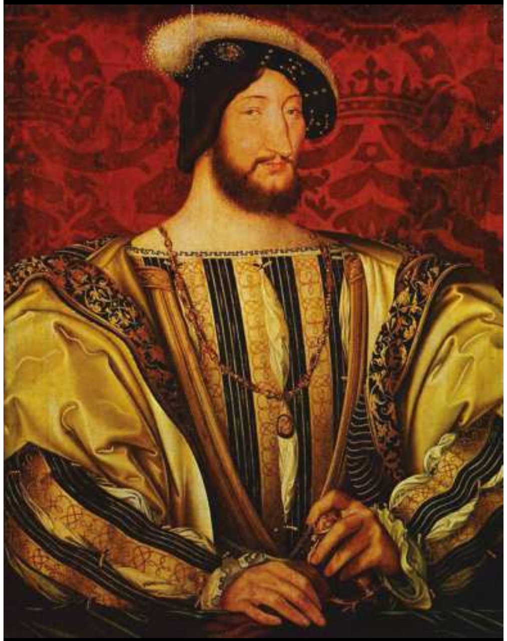
SECRETS OF THE FRENCH COURT

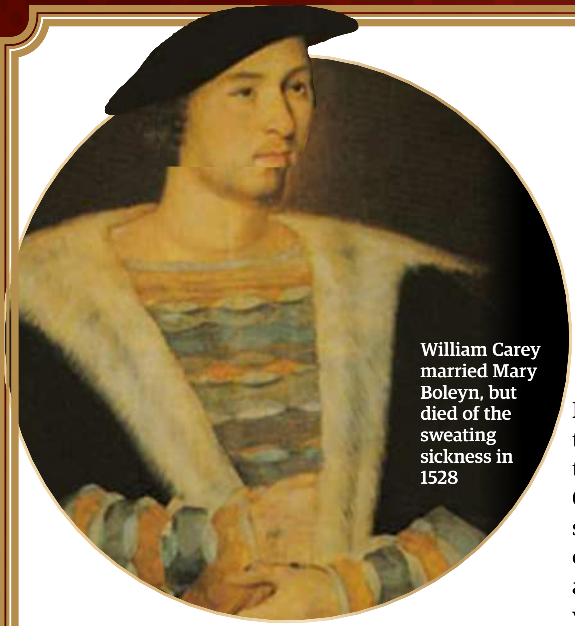
How Mary Boleyn became intertwined with French royal affairs

Anne and Mary Boleyn remained in France when their former mistress, Mary Tudor, who was the widow of Louis XII, returned to England in 1515. They transferred into the service of Claude, Louis' 15-year-old daughter and the wife of the new king, Francis I.

Francis was very different to his 'aged' predecessor. At 21, he was young, handsome and athletic, making no pretence of being faithful to his queen. He first made advances to his wife's stepmother, Mary Tudor, later recalling that she was "more dirty than queenly." He stopped short of consummating this relationship after being warned that, should the dowager queen become pregnant, the child might be attributed to Louis. Francis would therefore remain "plain Comte d'Angouleme, and never King of France."

Instead, Francis turned his attentions to the women of his court, who were rumoured to be as promiscuous as their king. One who caught his eye was Mary Boleyn. The relationship was brief, but it wash enough for the French king to later declare that Mary was "a very great whore and infamous above all." The elder Boleyn sister was soon shipped home by her scandalised family, while Anne – to whom no scandal was attached – remained in France.





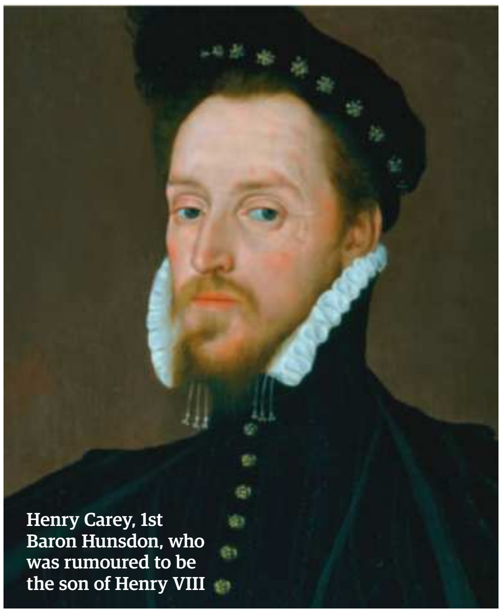
William Carey married Mary Boleyn, but died of the sweating sickness in 1528

> **“Anne, who wanted to marry well, was not interested in becoming Henry’s concubine”**

Unlike Francis I, Henry VIII was discreet in his love affairs, with little evidence of his relationship with Mary, aside from his own later admission. From early 1522, Mary’s husband began to receive significant royal grants, suggesting that he accepted the relationship between his wife and the king. Mary, who remained in Catherine of Aragon’s household, also began to star in court masques and entertainments. While there is no evidence that either her husband or her parents pressed her to accept the king, they may well have done. William Carey received a number of financial incentives, while Thomas Boleyn was appointed treasurer of the household in April 1522, a Knight of the Garter the following year and, in June 1525, ennobled as Viscount Rochford.

Mary’s children, too, may have been fathered by the king, although Henry acknowledged only one illegitimate child – Henry Fitzroy – during his lifetime. In around 1524 she gave birth to a daughter, Catherine Carey, while a son, Henry, followed in March 1526. There were certainly rumours about the children, with the vicar of Isleworth, for one, stating during his examination by the royal council on 20 April 1535 that “Mr Skidmore did show to me young Master Carey, saying that he was our sovereign lord the king’s son by our sovereign lady the queen’s sister, whom the queen’s grace might not suffer to be in the court.” Since Mary was married throughout her affair with Henry, the children’s paternity may have been uncertain, but the rumours later damaged the relationship between the Boleyn sisters. Thanks to her relationship with Henry VIII, it was Mary who was the most prominent Boleyn in the early 1520s. Anne finally returned to England in early 1522 when, no doubt thanks to her sister’s influence, she was able to enter Catherine of Aragon’s household. That March, she was honoured by being appointed as one of only eight court ladies to dance in a masque at Greenwich. The ladies, who each portrayed a virtue, were besieged in a mock castle by a group of masked knights, led by the king. It was ‘Beauty’ – portrayed by Mary Tudor – who danced with the king, while Mary Boleyn was prominent among the white satin clad ladies as ‘Kindness’. Anne, appropriately enough as it would later prove, was ‘Perseverance’. A place was also found for the siblings’ future sister-in-law, Jane Parker, a woman later accused by one courtier of being driven by her “lust and filthy pleasure.”

Thanks to Mary, the Boleyn family were in the ascendancy in the early 1520s, although Anne’s time at court was to be brief. Soon after arriving, she entered into a secret relationship with Henry Percy, heir to the earldom of Northumberland and leagues above her socially. The young man, who enjoyed visiting Catherine’s household, would “fall in dalliance among the queen’s maidens” and openly favoured the graceful Anne. It was soon rumoured that the couple were engaged, with both Cardinal Wolsey – in whose household Percy served – and the king becoming furious when they heard. Percy’s father was equally enraged, spiriting his son away where he was hurriedly married to the daughter of the Earl of Shrewsbury. Anne was sent home to Hever in disgrace. During Anne’s time in Kent, Mary Boleyn’s relationship with the king began to fizzle out. Although she had been his mistress for years, Mary, as a married woman, had no hopes of marrying the king – nor would Henry VIII have even considered it. The king, who had come to the throne as a 17 year old in 1509, had almost immediately married his former sister-in-law, Catherine of Aragon – the widow of his elder brother and more than five years his senior. At first, the royal marriage had seemed to be a love-match, with Henry taking delight in surprising Catherine with dancing and merriments. As the years passed, however, the age gap between the couple, which had once seemed so insignificant, became a chasm. Catherine, who lost all but one of her children in infancy, turned to the church for solace, while Henry looked towards other women. By 1525, when Anne Boleyn was finally permitted to return to court, he had no prospect of a legitimate son. When Anne Boleyn caught Henry’s eye around 1526, he was looking only for a new mistress, hoping that she would replace her sister in his affections. In February 1526 he made a public display of his new love by arriving at a joust wearing the motto ‘Declare I dare not.’ To Henry’s surprise, Anne – who had witnessed her sister’s abandonment – refused to follow her into the king’s bed. Instead, she retreated home to Hever, where she was followed by Henry’s increasingly ardent and frustrated letters.



Henry Carey, 1st Baron Hunsdon, who was rumoured to be the son of Henry VIII

Mary Boleyn

The elder but less well-known Boleyn sister, who was mistress to two kings

1499

Probable birth
Mary Boleyn was probably born in 1499 at Blickling Hall in Norfolk. She is the eldest surviving child and raised with her younger sister, Anne, and brother, George.

1514

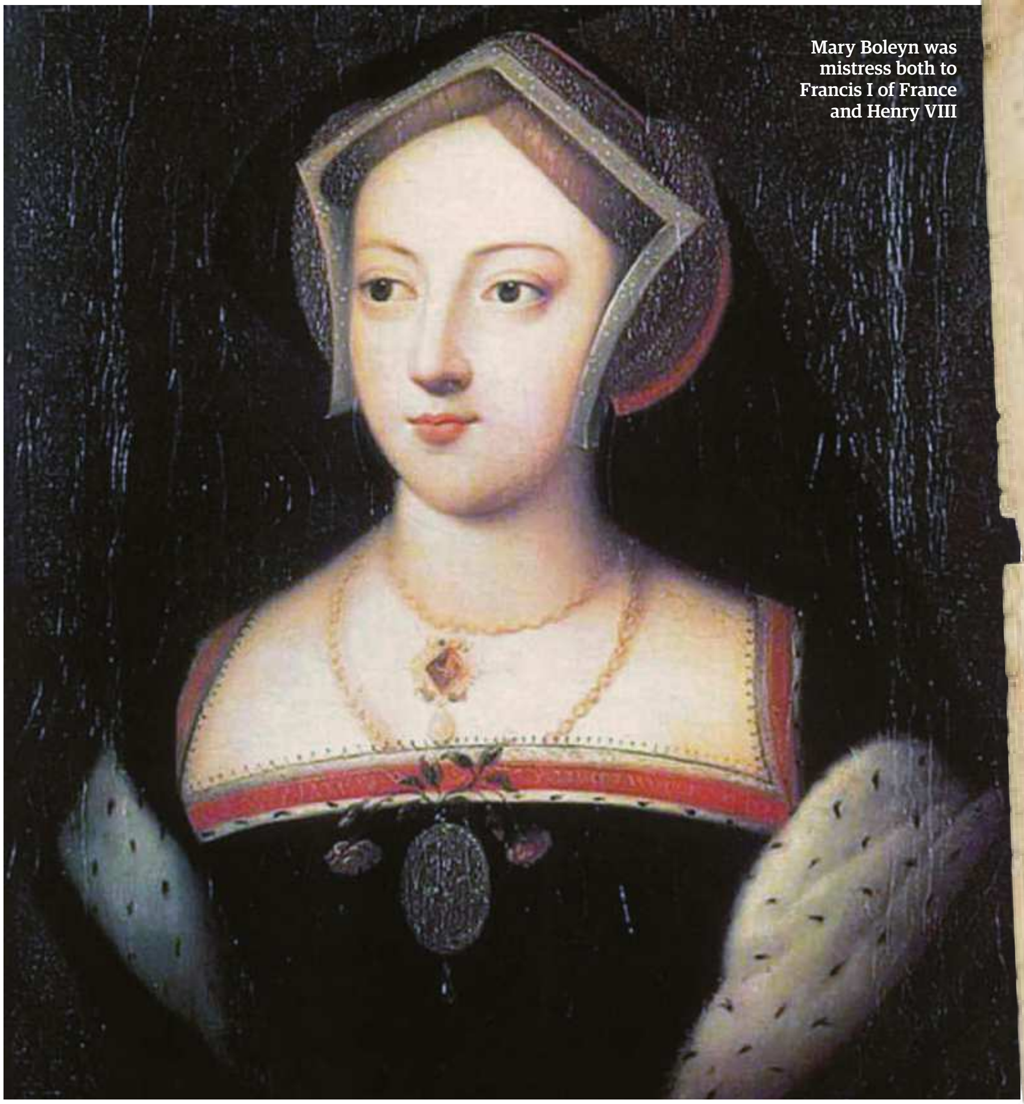
Arrival in France
Mary arrives in France to serve the new French queen. She was soon joined by her sister, Anne. Mary and Anne remain behind when their widowed mistress returns to England in 1515.

1520

Marries William Carey
Some time after returning to England, Mary marries the courtier, William Carey, on 4 February 1520, before taking up a court position in the household of Queen Catherine of Aragon.

1522

Becomes a royal mistress
Mary became Henry VIII’s mistress in around 1522, bearing two children who may have been fathered by the king. Thanks to her prominence, the sisters danced at a court masque that March.



Mary Boleyn was mistress both to Francis I of France and Henry VIII

WOMEN OF THE FRENCH COURT

The rules of etiquette must be obeyed

◈ Give birth to a son

The queen's role was to provide an heir. Claude was almost continually pregnant, with her ladies assisting during her numerous confinements.

◈ Don't mind the mistress

French kings traditionally appointed official mistresses, such as Anne de Pisseleu d'Heilly, who shared Francis I's bed and also wielded real political power.

◈ Dress to impress

French women were graceful and stylish. Anne Boleyn favoured fashionable French hoods, which displayed a daring amount of hair.

◈ Keep foreign kings amused

Claude's ladies entertained the English king at the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520, with feasting and dancing.

◈ Go into quarantine

Widowed French queens, such as Mary Tudor, entered seclusion to ensure that they would not bear their husbands a posthumous child.

In the years that followed, Mary was suddenly widowed in 1528 when William Carey was struck down by the terrifying sweating sickness – a highly infectious disease that could infect and kill within hours. Just a few years later, Anne conceived a second child early in 1534 and, that summer, sent for her sister to attend her at the birth. To the surprise and anger of the queen and her parents, Mary appeared visibly pregnant and was soon forced to admit that she had secretly married a servant, William Stafford, earlier that year. She would later explain herself, begging the king's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, whom she asked to intercede with her sister, to "consider, that he [Stafford] was young, and love overcame reason," and while "I might have had a greater man of birth and higher… I assure you I could never have had one that should have loved me so well, nor a more honest man."

Mary was upset by her family's fury, but she was unrepentant, declaring of her husband that "I had rather beg my bread with him than be the greatest queen in Christendom." Mary Boleyn, who had been the mistress of kings, eventually chose love over worldly status.

After her sister's brutal execution, Mary disappeared into obscurity, living out her years with the husband that she had married for love. She died on 19 July 1543, only seven years after her ill-fated sister.

> "MARY BOLEYN, WHO HAD BEEN THE MISTRESS OF KINGS, EVENTUALLY CHOSE LOVE OVER WORLDLY STATUS"

1525

One relationship ends, another begins
Mary's relationship with Henry ends around this time, with the king instead looking to Anne Boleyn to become his new mistress. She refuses him and returned to Hever.

1528

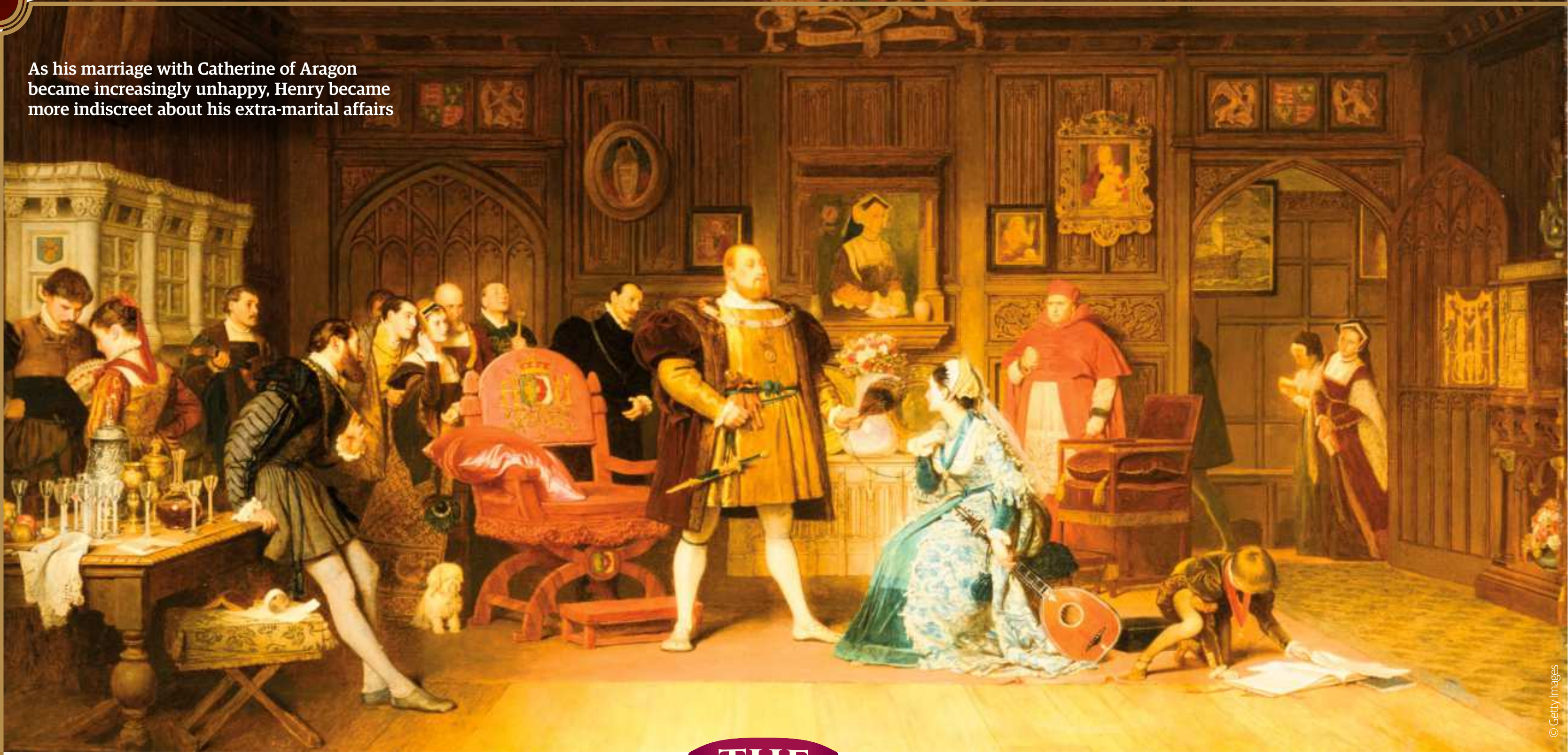
William Carey dies
Mary's husband, William Carey, dies suddenly of the sweating sickness, leaving her a widow in her late twenties with two children to raise.

1534

Secret marriage
Mary secretly marries her servant, William Stafford. She appears at court visibly pregnant and is banished by her furious sister, who lost her own baby soon afterwards.

1543

Death of Mary Boleyn
Mary dies in obscurity seven years after her sister. She was wealthy, having inherited much of the Boleyn fortune from her parents. She leaves behind a husband and two children.



As his marriage with Catherine of Aragon became increasingly unhappy, Henry became more indiscreet about his extra-marital affairs

© Getty Images

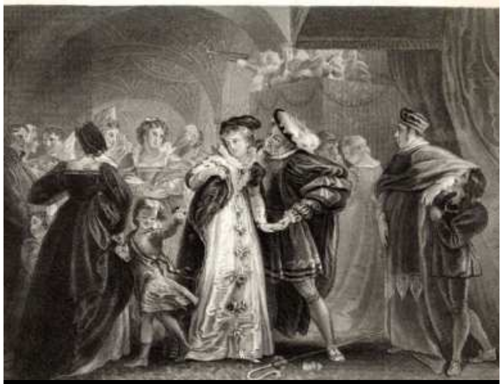
THE OTHER WOMEN

Everyone knows the names of Henry VIII's six wives and his mistresses Elizabeth Blount and Mary Boleyn… but what about the other women who briefly shared his bed?

Written by Melanie Clegg

Henry VIII has a reputation for philandering, no doubt thanks to his higher-than-average number of marriages, but he was actually surprisingly restrained when it came to his dealings with women – especially when compared to his peers such as Francis I and Ferdinand II of Aragon, both of whom were notorious womanisers. That's not to say that he was as uxorious as Emperor Charles V, who was devoted to his wife Isabella of Portugal, but the fact that he felt compelled to marry six women, at least three of whom he believed himself to be in love with, is evidence that for Henry, sex was something that ought to happen within marriage. This attitude, which in some respects was at odds with that of most of his royal contemporaries (and remember, this was in a period when even the pope might very likely have had not just mistresses but also a brood of children) had been instilled in him from childhood, when he was possibly being prepared for a future career in the church, as evidenced by the emphasis upon theology in his education. When his elder brother Arthur died in 1502, Henry replaced him as the heir and great hope of the Tudor dynasty – a fact that did not altogether please his father, Henry VII, who was concerned by Henry's strong resemblance, both physical and temperamental, to his handsome and charismatic maternal grandfather, Edward IV, whose womanising and extravagances had been extraordinary even by the standards of the day and had almost certainly led to his premature death at the age of 40 – a death that had plunged the country into a prolonged state of upheaval and led to the end of the Plantagenets' hold upon the throne. The fact that Edward's alleged secret marriage to a young noblewoman, Lady Eleanor Talbot, had resulted in his children, which included Henry's mother Elizabeth, being declared illegitimate only served to strengthen his father's determination that the young prince should not follow in his profligate grandfather's footsteps.

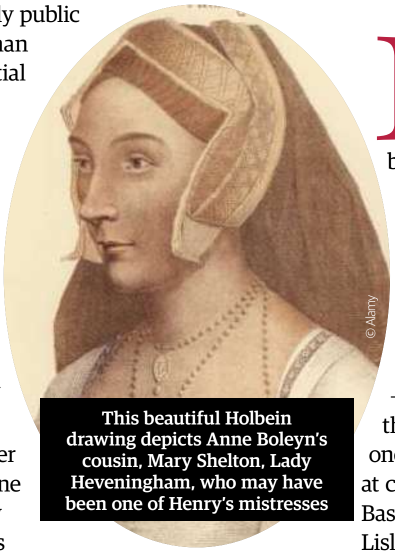
Much later, Henry would complain about the restrictions placed upon him by his father, who kept the young prince constantly at his side and maintained a close supervision of his daily routine, education and, crucially, associates. In such a sheltered atmosphere, it's little wonder that Henry apparently formed no significant relationships with women outside his family, other than one with Catherine of Aragon, the widow of his brother Arthur and his own future wife. Either that or his father's intense scrutiny forced Henry to become so discreet that he managed to hide all manner of youthful iniquity not just from the watchful eyes of the court and foreign ambassadors – who would surely have commented on such goings-on in the young prince's circle – but also from posterity. Certainly, it is not until 1510, one year into his reign, that the first whisper of scandal attached itself to Henry's name when it was rumoured (and with strong justification) that he was having an illicit affair with Lady Anne Hastings, one of the younger sisters of the Duke of Buckingham and, ironically, a niece of Henry's maternal grandmother, Elizabeth Woodville. The affair came to an abrupt end when Lady Anne's family, who were close to the queen, intervened and had her sent from court and it would be some time before anyone else's name was associated with any certainty with the young king – although that obviously doesn't mean that he wasn't still discreetly having affairs. There is a suggestion that he had a brief relationship with a young Flemish woman called Etiennette de la Baume, a lady-in-waiting to Margaret of Austria, during his sojourn in France in 1513 – certainly, she felt sufficiently close to Henry to write to him a year later in order to remind him that he had promised to give her a small dowry when she found a husband – a typically generous gesture from a man who loved to shower his lovers with gifts and on more than one occasion seems to have arranged an advantageous marriage for them when the affair was over. A year later, there were suggestions that Henry was involved with the beautiful and well-connected Elizabeth Bryan, the sister of his friend Sir Francis Bryan and a half-cousin of Anne Boleyn, Catherine Howard and Jane Seymour. Henry was extremely fond of all of the Bryan family, even appointing Francis and Elizabeth's mother as governess to his children, but it is clear from the expensive gifts of jewellery over the years – some of which came from the royal treasury – that he was particularly keen on Elizabeth. When she married one of his closest friends, Sir Nicholas Carew, in 1514, the match had almost certainly been arranged by Henry, who gave them generous gifts and made the unusual gesture of attending the wedding. However, although her brother was one of the few who remained in Henry's good books until the end, Elizabeth ended up living far from court after her husband was executed in 1539 and most of their lands were seized by the crown and redistributed.


Henry was actually relatively restrained when it came to women and disliked bawdy talk and coarse jokes

© Alamy

While Francis I enjoyed the companionship of a 'maîtresse-en-titre' ('chief mistress of the king'), who held a prominent position at court, Henry VIII clearly preferred to have brief, discreet liaisons with ladies like Jeanne Popincourt, a French noblewoman who had initially come to England to teach French to Henry's sisters before becoming a lady-in-waiting to Catherine of Aragon. It was only in 1517, when he became deeply enamoured with Elizabeth Blount, who bore his so, that Henry formed a long-term and relatively public attachment to someone other than his wife. This commendable initial discretion was almost certainly due to a respect for Queen Catherine's feelings, but, by 1518, Henry's sympathy for his wife was on the wane as she had hitherto failed to present him with the male heir that he longed for.

When his affair with Elizabeth Blount came to an end, she was replaced for a brief period by Mary Boleyn, who was then supplanted by her sister Anne after she had possibly borne him a child. By this time, Henry had become indiscreet about his extra-marital relationships to the extent that he offered Anne the position of maîtresse-en-titre, a signal honour that she showed little hesitation in turning down.


This beautiful Holbein drawing depicts Anne Boleyn's cousin, Mary Shelton, Lady Heveningham, who may have been one of Henry's mistresses

© Alamy

> "A YEAR INTO HENRY'S REIGN, THE FIRST WHISPER OF SCANDAL ATTACHED ITSELF TO HIS NAME"

However, if Anne, the poacher-turned-gamekeeper, thought she was alluring enough to keep Henry faithful, time was to prove her wrong. Although he appears to have stayed loyal during the early years of their romance, it seems that by 1534, when Anne is believed to have been pregnant for a second time, his eye was beginning to wander again for there was talk in diplomatic despatches of a 'very handsome' lady, possibly Anne's lady-in-waiting, Elizabeth Hervey, who'd caught Henry's attention and been dismissed from court as a result. After this, it seems that Anne was taking no chances and Henry's next affair was with one of her cousins, either Mary or Margaret Shelton, who was allegedly placed in the king's way by his wife when she discovered that she was pregnant again. Henry's once-apparently unbreakable attachment to Anne was staring to wane and the beleaguered queen knew it was only a matter of time before rival factions at court took advantage of the breach between them and attempted to supplant her with another rival for Henry's affections – as indeed is what eventually happened when she was replaced by Jane Seymour in 1536.

If Jane Seymour had lived longer then no doubt she too would have had to cope with Henry's affairs, but she died in October 1537, shortly after providing him with his much-longed-for heir. Interestingly, although Henry remained unwed until January 1540, it seems he formed no significant relationships with other women during this time – although there were rumours that he was considering marrying one of the attractive young ladies at court by the name of Anne Bassett, whose stepfather, Lord Lisle, was an illegitimate son of Henry's grandfather, Edward IV, although there is no evidence to suggest that she was romantically involved with the king. Of course, these rumours may have been little more than court gossip, but thanks to Henry's marriage to Catherine Howard, a young girl much like Anne Bassett with little to recommend her but aristocratic connections, youth and a pretty face, they also cannot be dismissed. Certainly, Anne Bassett's name came up yet again after Catherine Howard's fall from grace, along with that of Elizabeth Brooke, the divorced wife of Anne Boleyn's youthful paramour, Thomas Wyatt, to whom Henry was observed to pay marked attention. However, in the wake of his fifth wife's execution, the king had clearly decided that if he married again then a more mature woman with an unimpeachable reputation, such as the widowed Catherine Parr, would make a much more suitable wife as he entered his twilight years and no longer felt inclined to indulge in romantic philandering. Despite this, there were rumours that he was planning to replace Catherine Parr with her friend Katherine Willoughby, the widow of the Duke of Suffolk, who was a wealthy woman in her own right, while the Howard faction, undaunted by the failure of Henry's marriages to Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard, tried to promote the king's widowed daughter-in-law Mary Howard, Duchess of Richmond, as a prospective mistress if not wife for the aged ruler – much to her understandable dismay as, towards the end of his life in the 1540s, Henry was a far cry from the handsome, golden-haired prince who had once reawakened memories of his Plantagenet forebears.

LEGACY OF THE WIVES

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How the most momentous event in English history was tied up with a king's matrimonial problems

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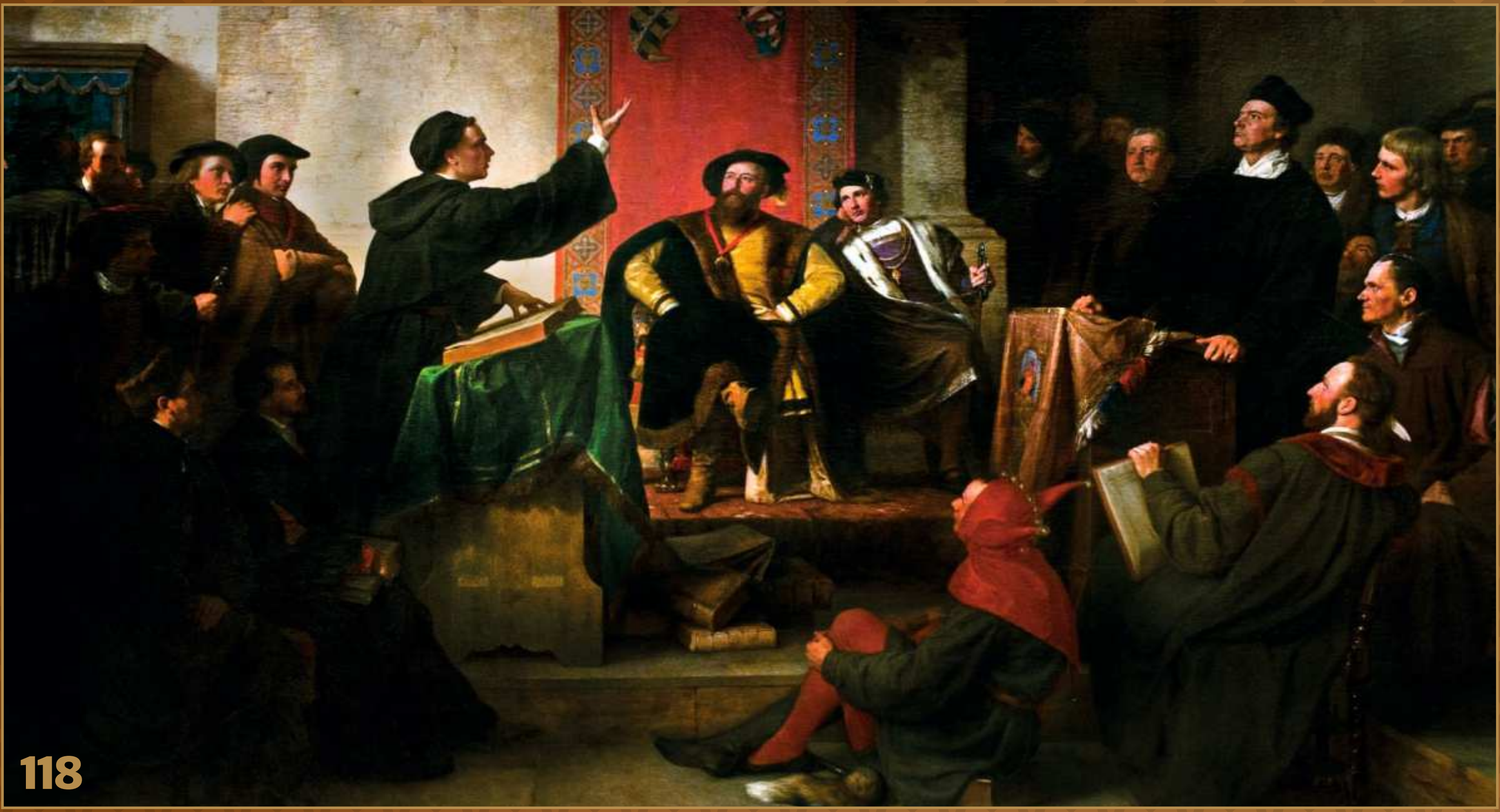
Henry VIII's marital problems cast very long shadows that lived on into the reigns of his three children

126 In the footsteps of Henry's queens

There are several places in England associated with the six wives of Henry VIII, many of which can still be visited today



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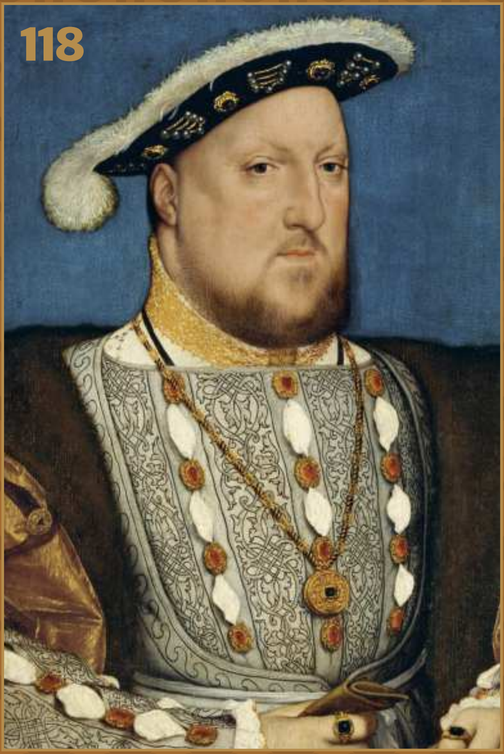

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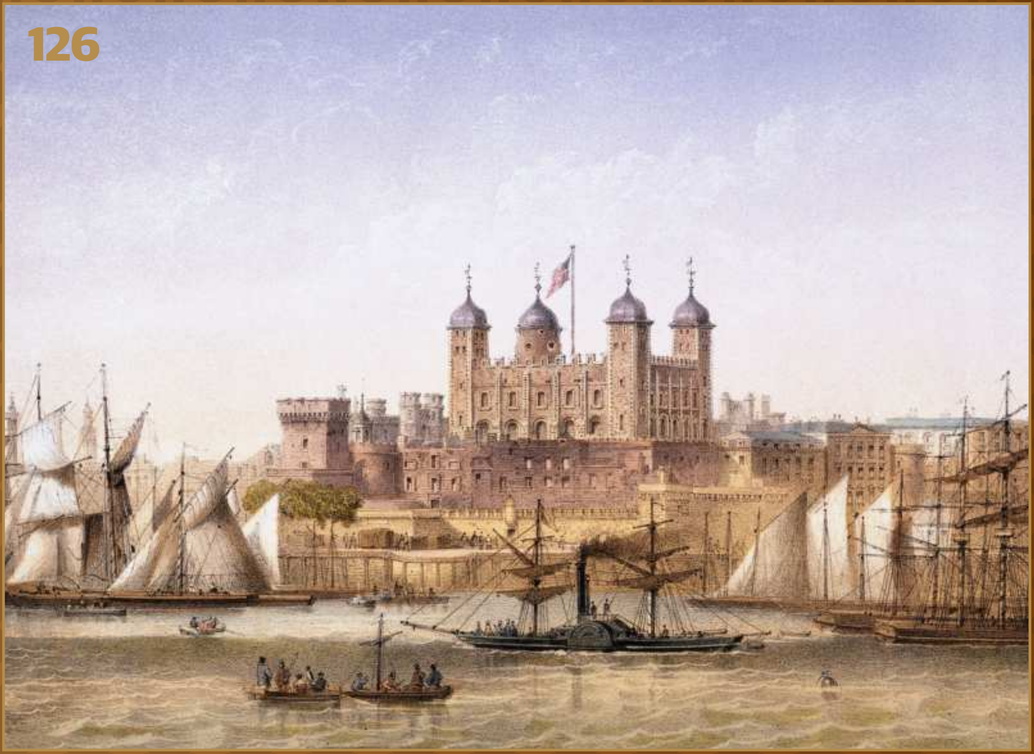

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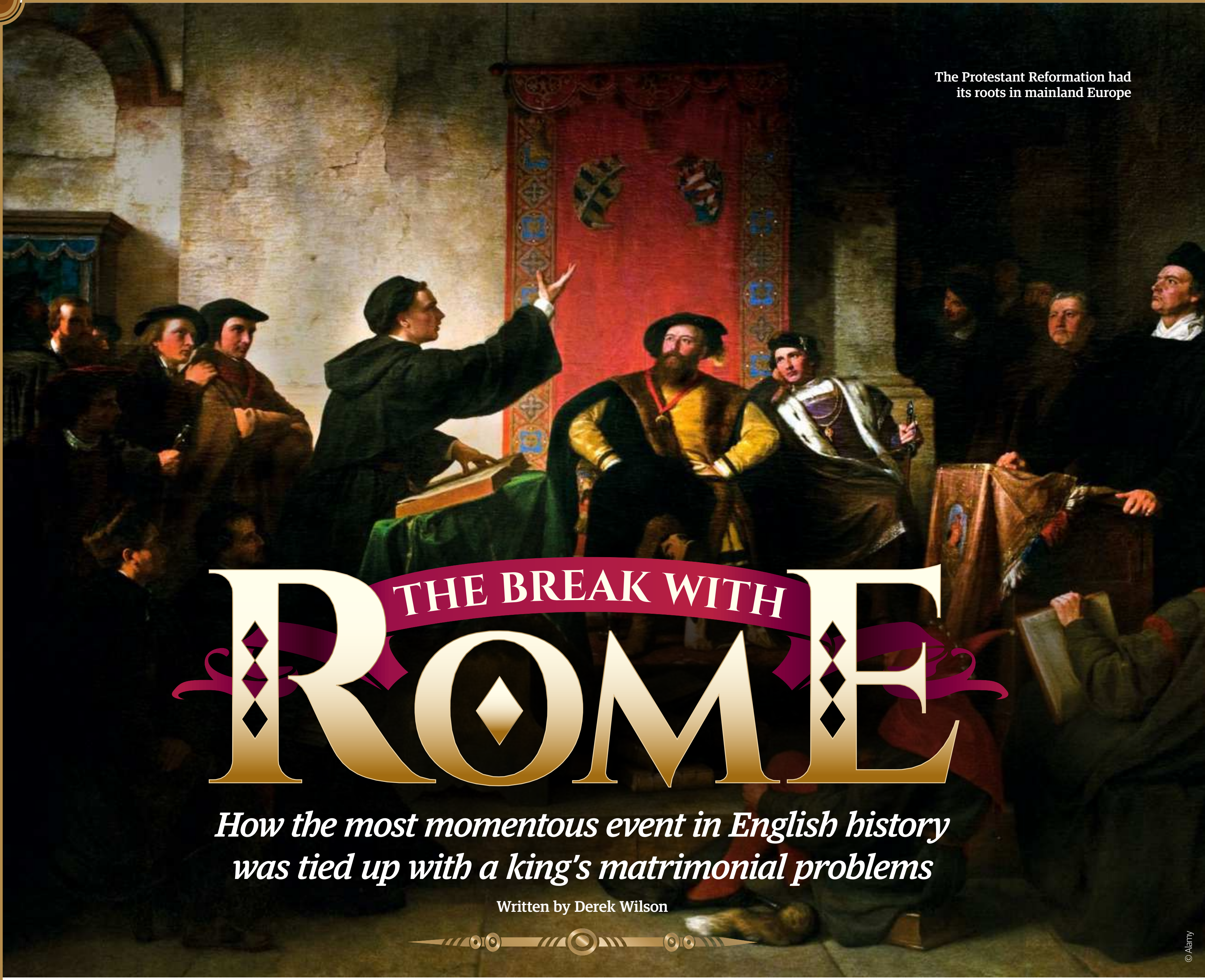
CASTLE
CHAPEL
OPEN



The Protestant Reformation had its roots in mainland Europe

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THE BREAK WITH ROME

How the most momentous event in English history was tied up with a king's matrimonial problems

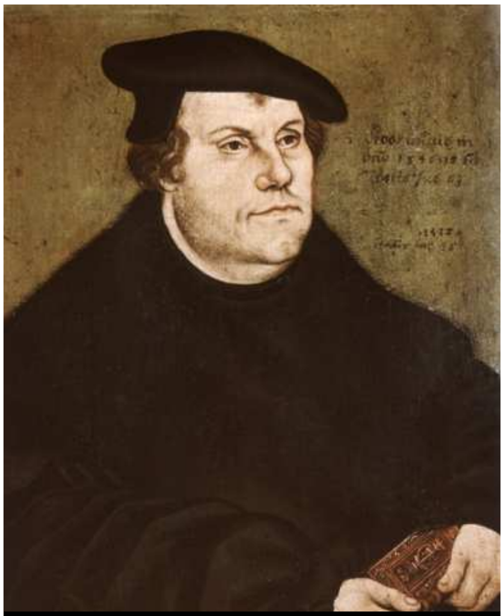
Written by Derek Wilson

Henry VIII severed the English church from Rome after some 930 years of obedience to the papacy in order to ditch his middle-aged wife and marry a younger woman. Right? Wrong. Or, at least, only right insofar as Henry VIII's matrimonial problems provided the spark that ignited volatile politico-religious gasses already wafting over the country. That movement we call the Reformation had been disturbing Europe for 20 years before the accession of the second Tudor king. It would have impacted on Henry's realm sooner or later. But how? That is the question.

Criticism of the Catholic church and its leaders – branded as heresy – was nothing new. Over the centuries several radical individuals and movements had demanded doctrinal and institutional reforms. Hundreds of people had been burned at the stake for daring to challenge the papacy. The head of the western Church in Rome had become a powerful political figure who, like his secular counterparts, made treaties, taxed his subjects, waged war, made and unmade kings and even led his armies into battle – and all in the name of God. There were always those who found it difficult to reconcile the lives of the ecclesiastical hierarchy – their wealth, their power, their moral lapses – with the God of whom the Bible spoke. The advent of print provided critics and satirists with a much-enlarged audience. Among the cognoscenti there existed strands of fashionable disillusionment, expressed well in Sebastian Brant's hugely popular *Ship of Fools* (1494 and, thereafter, appearing in numerous translations):

"All lands in Holy Writ abound
And works to save the soul are found,
The Bible, Holy Fathers' lore
And other such in goodly store,
So many that I feel surprise
To find men growing not more wise
But holding writ and lore in spite.
The whole world lives in darksome night.
In blinded sinfulness persisting,
While every street sees fools existing
Who know but folly, to their shame,
Yet will not own to folly's name."

In the view of many it was the clergy who came in for the most criticism. It was they who, by their words and deeds, should have set a true course for humanity's 'ship'. Such wry comments had an effect on public opinion and, from time to time,



Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk and professor of moral theology, attacked the clergy with his *95 Theses*

the bubbling lava of anticlericalism broke through the surface of English society: "Sir William Coffin was on one occasion passing Bideford churchyard, and seeing a number of people standing idle, he inquired the reason, and was told that the corpse of a man had been brought there to be interred, and the mourners were all assembled, but the priest had refused to read the burial service, as the friends of the deceased would not render up the dead man's cow, which was the only property that was left, out of which to pay the priest's fee or mortuary. On hearing this, Sir William sent for the priest, and required him to perform the duties of his office, which on his still refusing to do, Sir William ordered the sexton and others to place him in the new-made grave, and bury him instead of the corpse: but the priest, preferring life to such a kind of death, repented err it was too late."

What normally held such protests in check was the fear of divine retribution. Ordinary people – most of them illiterate – accepted the official teaching that the clergy were a holy caste and that to oppose them would result in eternal damnation.

"PEOPLE ACCEPTED THAT THE CLERGY WERE A HOLY CASTE AND OPPOSING THEM WOULD RESULT IN ETERNAL DAMNATION"

Henry VIII hated the heresy in Luther's *95 Theses*, but never spelled out what he did believe

Then, in 1517, an Augustinian monk in Saxony attacked the doctrinal basis upon which the spiritual authority of the clergy rested: Martin Luther published *95 Theses* calling for an academic debate on the pope's claim to be able to absolve (for a fee) the sins of people who died and who were – as it was believed – in purgatory. What was remarkable about Luther's protest was, not so much his argument, as the enthusiasm with which it was taken up. *95 Theses* was widely published and translated into various languages; it became the cause célèbre of the age. What Luther was asserting was that, according to the Bible, a person's eternal destiny was determined by the response of repentance and faith to God's love *in this life* and not by what the pope claimed to be able to do post mortem. He was thus setting the authority of the Church's foundation document against the authority of the Church's earthly head. This was, in a nutshell, what the Reformation was all about – authority. It would divide Europe into Catholic and Protestant (to use the name adopted later) camps.

However, we must be careful not to oversimplify. Religious conviction in the 16th century was not something that individuals were free to decide for themselves. Each European state was governed on the basis of a fusion of temporal and spiritual authorities. We may take the situation in England in the 1520s as pretty typical. It was axiomatic that God was the source of all rule in the affairs of the state. His authority was passed down to the humblest person in the realm through two hierarchies. Temporal rule was vested in the king and from him to the nobility, gentry and so on through all the lesser ranks in the social order. Simultaneously, spiritual authority passed via the pope to the archbishops, bishops and all grades of the clergy and so to the laity. There was no question of individuals deciding whether they were Protestant or Catholic. The religion of the people was the religion of the king, an arrangement deemed absolutely vital to the peace, integrity and unity of the nation. Any weakening of the traditional structure was regarded as anarchy, something feared above all else by the political classes.

So the questions that need to be posed are,
(1) What did Henry VIII believe?
(2) To what extent was that belief founded on religious conviction?
(3) What part in it was played by political considerations?

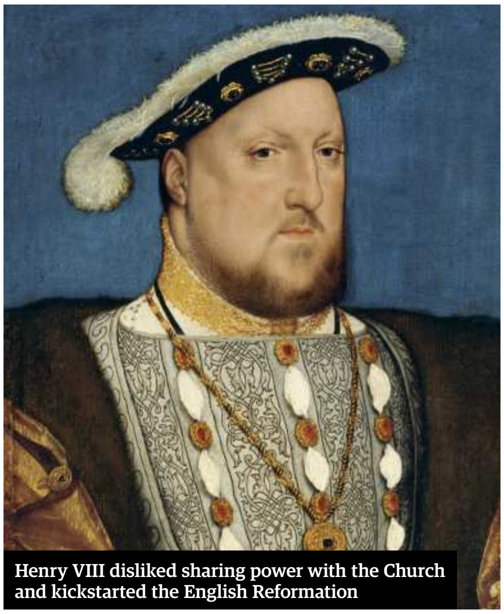
At the beginning of his reign, Henry was, as far as we can gather, a conventional Catholic. Throughout his life he seldom failed to attend mass every day (sometimes two or three times a day). However, he was not given to the more enthusiastic expressions of devotion such as the collecting or veneration of holy relics and he is only once recorded as going on pilgrimage. The king seems to have had no great liking for the religious orders. During the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s he personally ordered savage punishments of those suspected of immoral behaviour, but even before this his attitude to the monastic life was distinctly cool. It may be that he regarded 'holy' men and women as rivals. Any who claimed to have a 'hot line' to God, particularly if they claimed divine revelations that challenged royal policy, were regarded as usurping that privileged position the king claimed to be uniquely his own.

Henry's religious conservatism was roused by Luther's challenge to Catholic doctrine. In 1521 he published under his own name (though many believe he had considerable help from Thomas More) *The Defence of the Seven Sacraments*, a robust rebuttal of the German monk's challenge to official sacramental theology. At this stage in his life Henry was clearly siding with the papacy in its war with heresy.

However, he was also influenced by the more moderate wing of the reform movement known as the New Learning. This called for changes in church doctrine and practice, on theological and philosophical grounds. Its most accomplished advocate was the brilliant Dutch scholar, Desiderius Erasmus, who spent several years in England. As well as intellectual treatises, he wrote a popular runaway best-seller called *Praise of Folly*, which was as critical as Brant's *Ship of Fools*, but more robust. Henry's mind was, therefore, open to the need for religious change and he genuinely believed that it was his responsibility to encourage it. By 1537 he had come to embrace this wholeheartedly, despite the fact that, in 1521, he had written a book attacking Luther.

So, what had happened in those 16 years? Attention must be focused on developments in

Henry's domestic situation. In 1533 dramatic events made it necessary for Henry to act and act quickly. In January Anne knew that she was pregnant. Good news? Yes - if the baby was legitimate. Henry and Anne were quietly and secretly married. But that solved nothing in the short term - until Henry's first marriage had been dissolved. The new archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, could be relied on to declare the union of Henry and Catherine void. But he was not yet consecrated and could not be until letters arrived from Rome ratifying his appointment. These came at the end of March. Two months later an ecclesiastical court presided over by the new archbishop declared the king's first marriage contrary to divine law and therefore voided. So far, so good. But it was obvious that Catherine would appeal to Rome to have the decision overturned. The king and his Mr Fix-it, Thomas Cromwell, were, however, ahead of the game. They secured an Act of Parliament that was the lynchpin of the English Reformation.


Henry VIII disliked sharing power with the Church and kickstarted the English Reformation

> *"By divers sundry old authentic histories and chronicles it is manifestly declared and expressed that this realm of England is an empire... governed by one supreme head and king having the dignity and royal estate of the imperial crown of the same, unto whom a body politic, compact of all sorts of degrees of people divided in terms and by names of spiritualty and temporalty, be bounden and owe to bear next to God a natural and humble obedience; he being also institute and furnished by the goodness and sufferance of Almighty God with plenary, whole and entire power, pre-eminence, authority, prerogative and jurisdiction ..."*

Thus ran the preamble to the Statute in Restraint of Appeals passed by parliament in April 1533. By claiming that the Crown had always held total sway over all subjects it implied that the papacy had usurped some of the king's authority. This 'anomaly' was now being corrected and, in future, there would be no appeal for final justice outside the realm. A year later the message was spelled out even more plainly in the Act of Supremacy, which declared the anointed sovereign to be "the only supreme head in earth of the Church of England... annexed and united to the imperial crown of this realm." Thanks largely to the skilful handling of the House of Commons by Cromwell there was little effective opposition to the measure. The legislators debated one of the most important Acts in English history almost in an atmosphere of anti-climax.

It was not so in the country at large. Several senior clergy and many of the religious houses remained loyal to the pope. Few were prepared to indulge in open resistance but disaffection lurked in many places, particularly in the monasteries. They became the government's next targets. In the summer of 1536, visitations carried out by Cromwell and his agents began closing some of the smaller convents for a variety of alleged moral offences. It was this that sparked rebellion. In the regions farthest from the capital, men took up arms to protect the ancient ways. The northern shires were the worst affected. Ill-armed but determined bands roamed the land, first in Lincolnshire, then in Yorkshire and adjacent regions. Henry sent his generals to deal with what the insurgent leaders called the Pilgrimage of Grace while he, himself, took refuge in Windsor Castle. It was the worst crisis of the reign and the rising was put down with considerable loss of life.

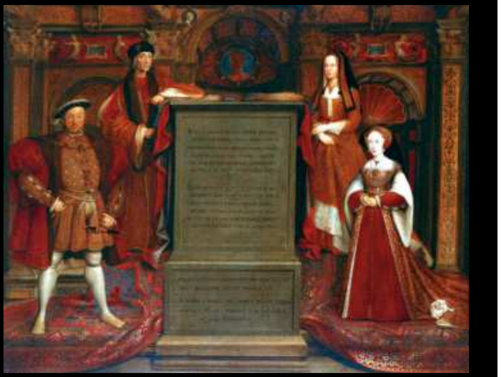
Its effect on the king was to make him more truculent. There was no question of considering the grievances of the people. If he agreed to hold a parliament in the north - as he did - that was purely a delaying tactic. All he could (or would) see was that his authority had been challenged. He expressed this tersely in his response to the Lincolnshire rebels: "How presumptuous, then, are ye, the rude commons of one shire - and that one of the most brute and beastly... and of least experience to find fault with your Prince."

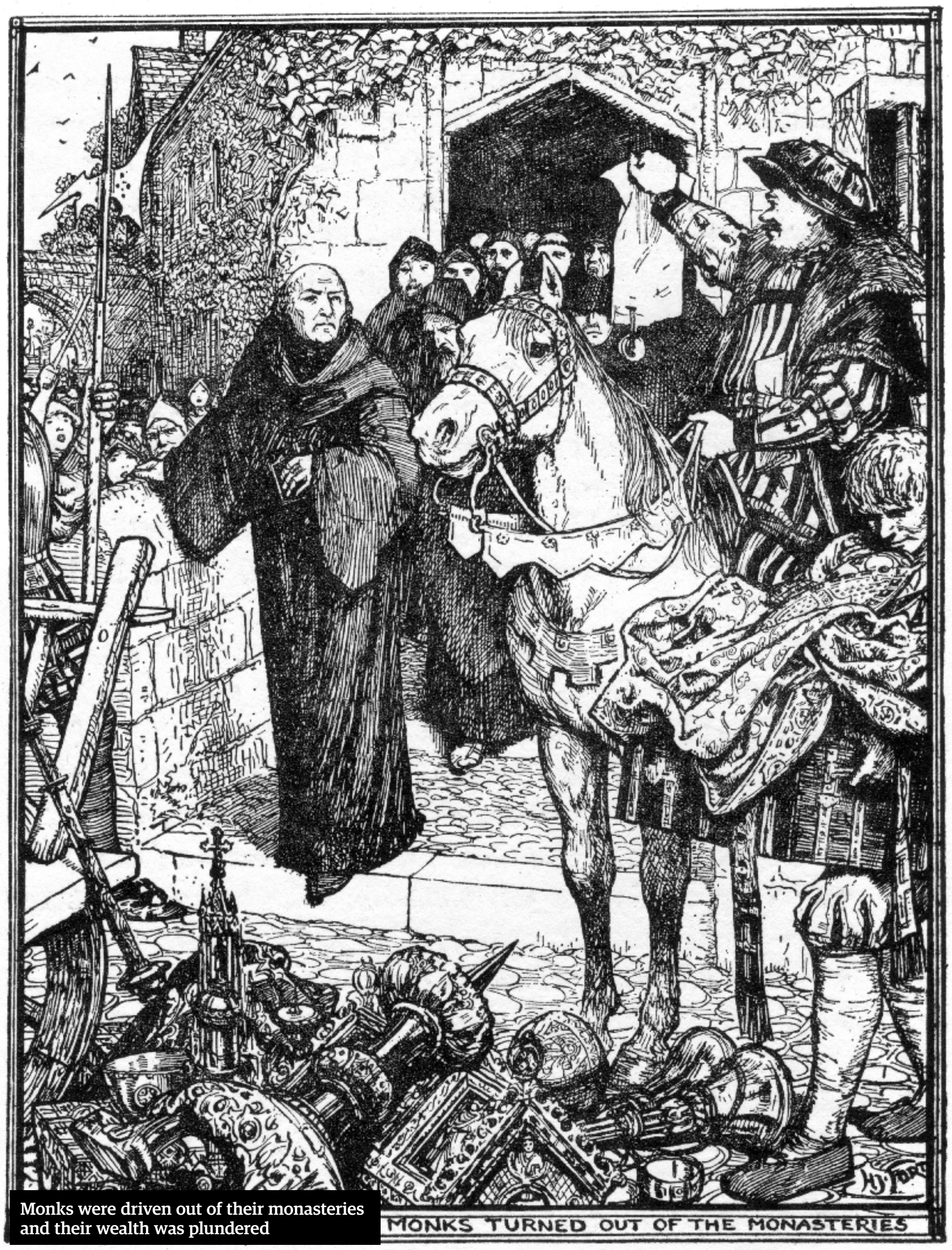
"CROMWELL WAS SENT TO THE BLOCK AS A TRAITOR, BUT HE HAD THE LAST LAUGH – HE'D SURROUNDED HENRY'S HEIR TO THE THRONE WITH MEN OF THE NEW LEARNING"

RE-IMAGING THE DYNASTY

Henry called upon Holbein to illustrate the new era

After the defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace, Henry was ready to project a new image of the Tudor dynasty. The privy chamber, where he received ambassadors and other important dignitaries, was decorated with a life-size mural by Hans Holbein the Younger representing himself, his parents and his new wife, Jane Seymour. But it was the figure of Henry himself that dominated the composition This was the first appearance of the king that became the standard and much-copied representation of Henry. He was painted 'full frontal' in a truculent stance intended to overawe the observer. To drive home the message, a sermonette was displayed in the form of a carved message on the central plinth: It mentioned the achievements of Henry VII in defeating his enemies and pacifying the nation. But it then continued, 'The son was born to a greater destiny.' Henry was lauded above everything else for purifying the ranks of the clergy and forcing 'presumptuous popes' to yield.


The Whitehall mural was destroyed in a fire in 1698. Fortunately, Remigius van Leemput had copied it


MONKS TURNED OUT OF THE MONASTERIES
HJ Ford

Monks were driven out of their monasteries and their wealth was plundered

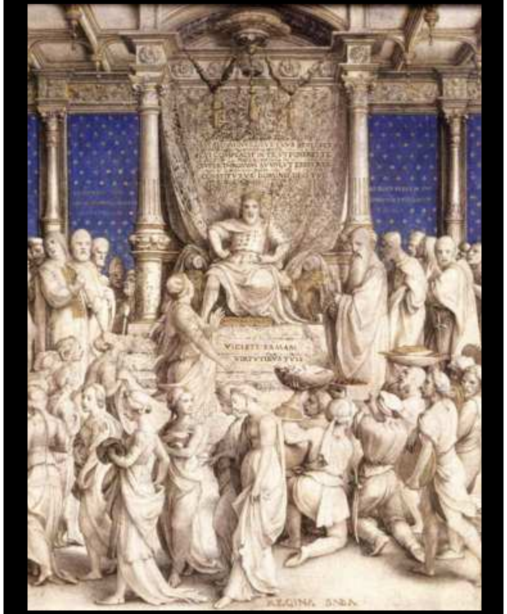
What Henry failed to grasp was that every move against the Catholic, traditionalist majority was an encouragement to the Protestant, reformist minority. Radicalism was spreading on the Continent where various rulers had embraced Lutheranism as their official religion. This was turning Europe into rival camps and impacting on international relations. England could not stay neutral in this process and the government was under pressure from both internal and external forces to take sides. Having, for his own purposes, advanced Cranmer and Cromwell to leading positions in Church and State, Henry found himself being nudged closer to the Reformist position, though not necessarily agreeing with it. In fact, it was difficult for contemporaries to discover exactly what he did believe (and historians argue about it to this day). Two changes, in particular, were destined to have a considerable influence at grassroots level: Cromwell personally sponsored an authorised vernacular translation of the Bible and Cranmer was developing an English liturgy to replace the Latin mass.

The Catholic faction at court, led by the Duke of Norfolk and the Bishop of Winchester, struck back and, in 1540, succeeded in turning the king against Cromwell, who was sent to the block as a traitor. It seemed that policy was about to change and the break with Rome to be reversed. But Cromwell had the last laugh. He had surrounded Prince Edward, the heir to the throne, with men of the New Learning. In the next reign, England would be hustled farther along the Reformation road.

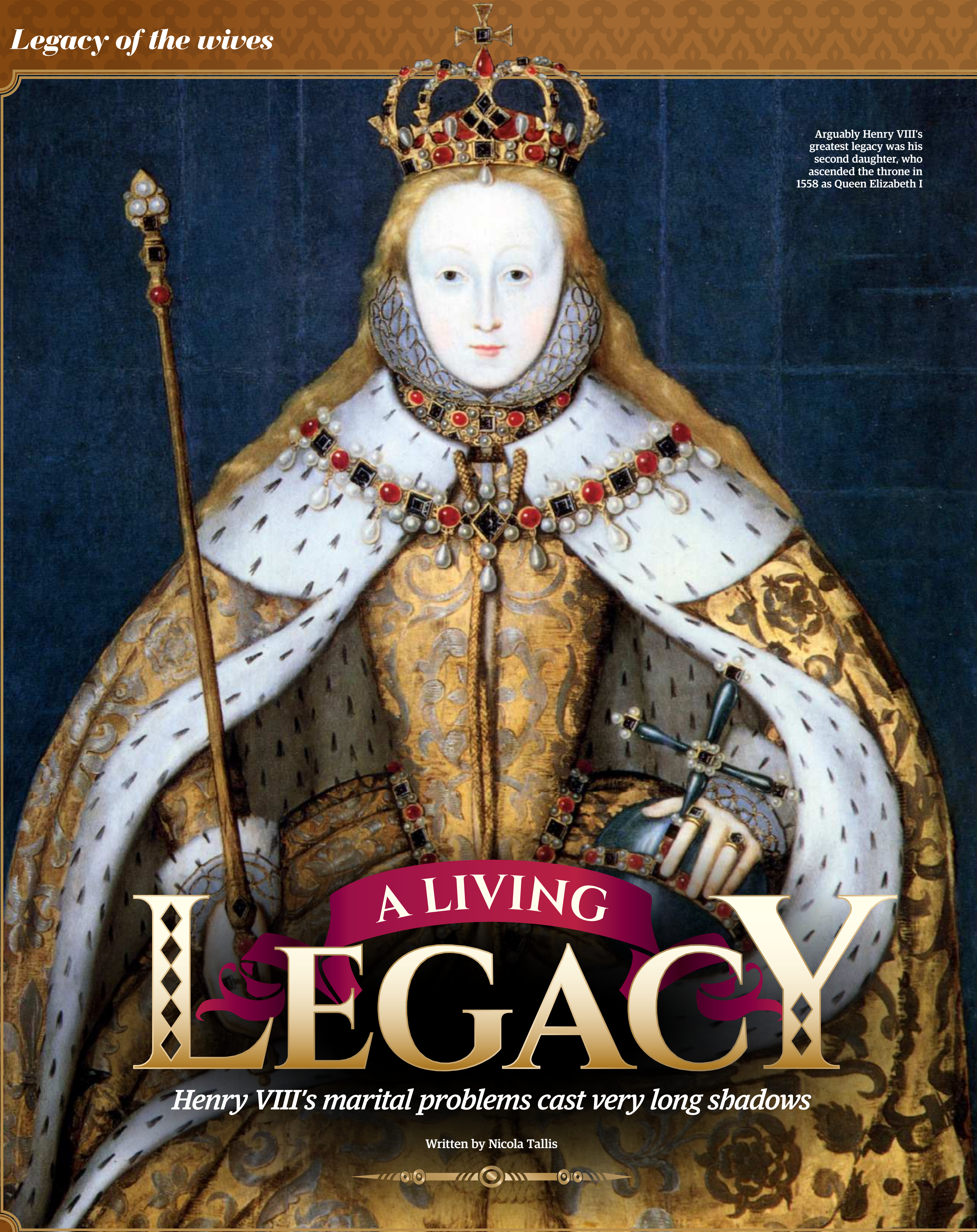
PROJECTING THE ROYAL IMAGE

Henry was all about the propaganda

In the early 16th century, the lives of all Englishmen were dominated by images. Church interiors were vivid with biblical and hagiographical subjects displayed in stained-glass windows and painted walls. As the Reformation took hold, much of this decoration disappeared. But other images were created for books, pamphlets and portable prints to convey the new iconography. One such illustration represents the new image of royal authority that Henry wanted to convey. It purports to depict the Old Testament story of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon, renowned for his wisdom, but clearly 'Solomon' is a representation of the enthroned English king, while the queen and her attendants probably represent the church. There are Latin inscriptions, such as 'Blessed be the Lord, thy God who delighted to set you upon his throne to be the ruler chosen by God' and 'Your virtues have exceeded your reputation.' This was probably a unique coloured engraving designed as a gift but there were similar items of visual flattery in manuscripts and also sold as individual prints with which people could decorate their houses. Such propaganda was of vital importance to the king in keeping his subjects aware of the new regime in Church and State.



Another of Holbein's Henry portraits, this time showing him as King Solomon



Arguably Henry VIII's greatest legacy was his second daughter, who ascended the throne in 1558 as Queen Elizabeth I

A LIVING LEGACY

Henry VIII's marital problems cast very long shadows

Written by Nicola Tallis

One hundred years after Henry VIII's desperate attempts to preserve the Tudor dynasty, it had long vanished. His three surviving children, Mary, Elizabeth and Edward, had each, in turn, ruled England and died childless.

When the old king breathed his last on 28 January 1547, he left behind a governing council with a great deal of unfinished business on its agenda. The new ruler, Edward VI, was a boy of nine. Real power, therefore, would lie with whichever councillors could grab it.

Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, Edward's maternal uncle, grasped the initiative as Lord Protector with authority over his colleagues and a new title: Duke of Somerset. Edward's tutors were scholars of the New Learning and their royal charge was an apt pupil who eagerly embraced the new reformed faith.

Archbishop Cranmer introduced the first English Prayer Book in 1549, and its formularies and teachings were backed by an Act of Uniformity. For the first time parishioners were not only able to understand the services; they were expected to take part in them. It is difficult for us to understand the impact of all this on Edward's subjects – the unity and harmony Henry had tried to impose through obedience to the crown had not been achieved.

One bishop, writing to a friend in Switzerland, wrote of the situation: "Alas! Not only are those heresies reviving among us which were formerly dead and buried, but new ones are springing up every day ... On the other hand, a great portion of the kingdom so adheres to the popish faction, as altogether to set at nought God and the lawful authority of the magistrates; so that I am greatly afraid of a rebellion and civil discord."

His fears were realised all too soon. In the summer of 1549 there were civil disturbances in areas as far apart as Cornwall, Yorkshire, East Anglia and Hampshire. Bad harvests, heavy taxation and trade recession were the underlying causes of discontent, but there was no unifying factor. While the Cornish rebels were traditionalists who rejected the new Prayer Book, Robert Kett, who led the rising in Norfolk, claimed that he was pressing on with Somerset's reform programme and was impatient at the government's slow progress.

Events in Norfolk were particularly worrying. The rebels seized control of Norwich, England's second city, and defeated a royal army sent against them. Meanwhile in the southwest, disaffection reigned for several months. Both insurrections were eventually suppressed with considerable loss of life, but they had shattered Somerset's authority and reputation.

Just as in the previous reign, family rivalries played an important part in power politics. A rival caucus gathered around John Dudley, now Earl of Warwick, the councillor and general who had finally brought Kett's rebellion to an end. Somerset responded by maintaining firm control of the young king. He might have survived the challenge had it not been for the behaviour of his headstrong younger brother, Thomas Seymour.

> "WITH THE IRON WILL THAT WOULD BECOME HER LEGACY, MARY SET ABOUT TURNING THE CLOCK BACK"

Seymour had married Henry VIII's widow, Catherine Parr, and used her to gain access to Princess Elizabeth, intending to transfer his affections there. But when his schemes came to light he was arrested, tried and sentenced to death in March 1549. Six months later Somerset was sent to the Tower of London and Dudley, having taken the title Duke of Northumberland, assumed power. Though Somerset, after a few months in the Tower, was restored to the Council, he soon began plotting against Northumberland, and he was executed in January 1552.

Northumberland looked forward to the king's imminent 16th birthday when he would assume power and, in a short space of time, choose a Protestant princess to continue the Tudor line.

In February the boy king fell ill, probably with tuberculosis, but the succession issue greatly troubled his thoughts. Determined to prevent his country relapsing into Catholicism, he drew up a "devise for the succession". It established that Mary and Elizabeth were to be excluded and that the crown would pass to his cousin, Lady Jane Grey (of whose evangelical faith he wholly approved) and thence to her heirs male.

On 6 July, Edward VI died. Jane was duly proclaimed queen and entered the Tower to prepare for her coronation. But in distant Norfolk, Mary Tudor had announced her decision to challenge Edward's 'device' and soon Catholic supporters were flocking to her banner. With astonishing speed, support for Jane ebbed away. Northumberland led an army out to meet Mary's host but, near Cambridge, he acknowledged that his cause was lost and submitted to Mary.

After all the humiliation she and her mother had suffered, Mary savoured her vindication. This was not only a personal triumph; it was a triumph for Catholic truth. With the iron will that would

AN UNSURE FATE

Elizabeth was a princess in fear from her foes and her friends

"Much suspected by me, Nothing proved can be." These lines, scratched with a diamond on a window of Woodstock Palace, succinctly expressed the plight Elizabeth was in during the reign of Mary Tudor. She was 19 in 1553 when her half-sister became queen and she was next in line for the throne, but there were many in Mary's entourage who wanted to see her dead. Some urged Mary to have her half-sister tried for treason, while others wanted her moved to some remote place where she might succumb to 'mishap' or 'illness'.

When Wyatt's rebellion broke out, Elizabeth was hustled off to the Tower of London, but she did not sit back and wait upon events. Instead she wrote letters to the queen and sought an interview so that she could prove her innocence of any involvement in conspiracy. After a few months she was moved to the gatehouse of the dilapidated royal hunting lodge of Woodstock, near Oxford.

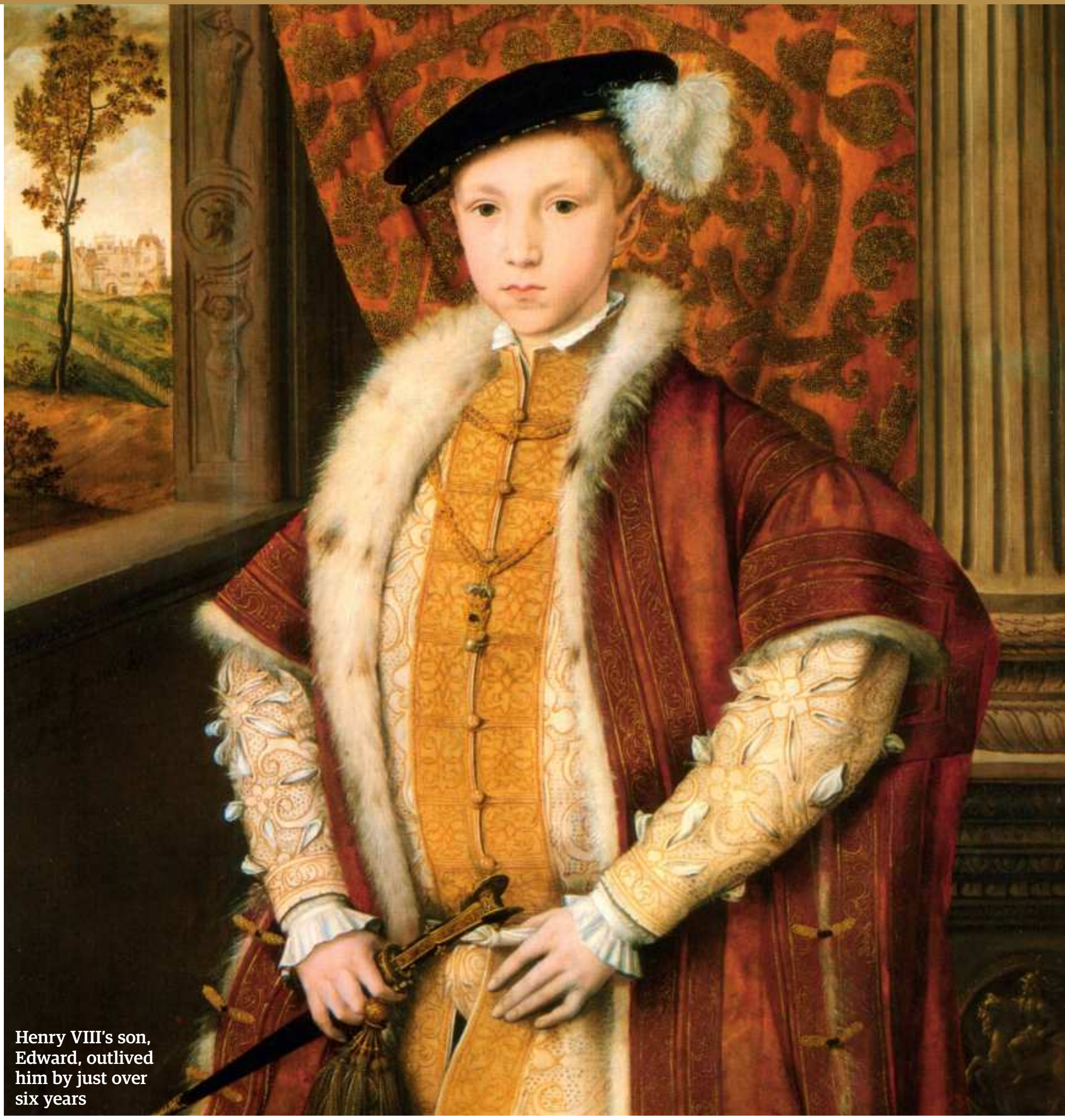
Three things saved Elizabeth from the angry backlash she might have expected; the first was her own canniness. Though her own education had inclined her towards humanistic evangelicalism, she made great show of Catholic devotion, concealing her real beliefs. The second was her popularity – she had never shared the contempt in which her mother was widely held. Many people felt sympathy for an orphaned teenager and Mary had no desire to appear guilty of shedding innocent blood. But thirdly – and perhaps most importantly – Elizabeth enjoyed the support of Philip II, who calculated that if anything should happen to his wife, it would be useful to be on good terms with the next occupant of the throne.

become her legacy, Mary set about turning the clock back. Northumberland, Jane Grey, Cranmer and other representatives of the previous regime could be, and were, efficiently disposed of, but to win back the hearts of the people to the Catholic Church was nigh-on impossible.

It was probably still true that the majority of English men and women were in favour of a return to the old ways, but the geographical distribution of crypto-papists was not in their favour. Protestantism had taken a hold in London, the southeast, several port towns and major commercial centres. In addition, the educated landowning class tended to favour the changes of the previous two reigns – those who had profited from the dissolution of the monasteries were not likely to be happy about plans to re-endow the religious life.

The queen filled her council with men of her own persuasion, and in 1554 she brought back Cardinal Pole, who arrived with legatine authority to receive England back into the Catholic Church. In 1556 he was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury to replace Cranmer, who had been deprived by the pope and burned as a heretic.

Pole adopted a pragmatic attitude, knowing that severity could be counter-productive, and Mary would have been well advised to listen to him. She, who had experienced so much grief at the hands of anti-Catholic regimes, had little tolerance for those who persisted in Protestant 'error'. She had the Medieval heresy laws, which had been repealed by Henry VIII and Edward VI, reinstated in January 1555. Arrests and interrogations soon followed.


Henry VIII's son, Edward, outlived him by just over six years

The persecution that now began was a response to stubborn Protestantism, but also to protests against Mary's marriage. She had decided, contrary to the advice of several of her councillors, to accept the suit of Philip II of Spain – a match that was widely unpopular as people feared that England would become a puppet state under foreign rule.

Disaffection culminated in the Wyatt Rebellion of 1554. Its originators planned for spontaneous outbreaks across much of southern England but, due to poor organisation, only Kent, led by Sir Thomas Wyatt, took up arms, and when he failed to capture London the rebellion collapsed. The ringleaders were, of course, executed, along with several prominent sympathisers.

The government hoped that a few high-profile trials would be enough to break the opposition, but they miscalculated. Sermons, tracts and secret meetings critical of the regime continued. Reaction increased to deal with the threat, and eventually some 300 men and women were burned as heretics. Many of their friends and neighbours revered them as heroes and martyrs.

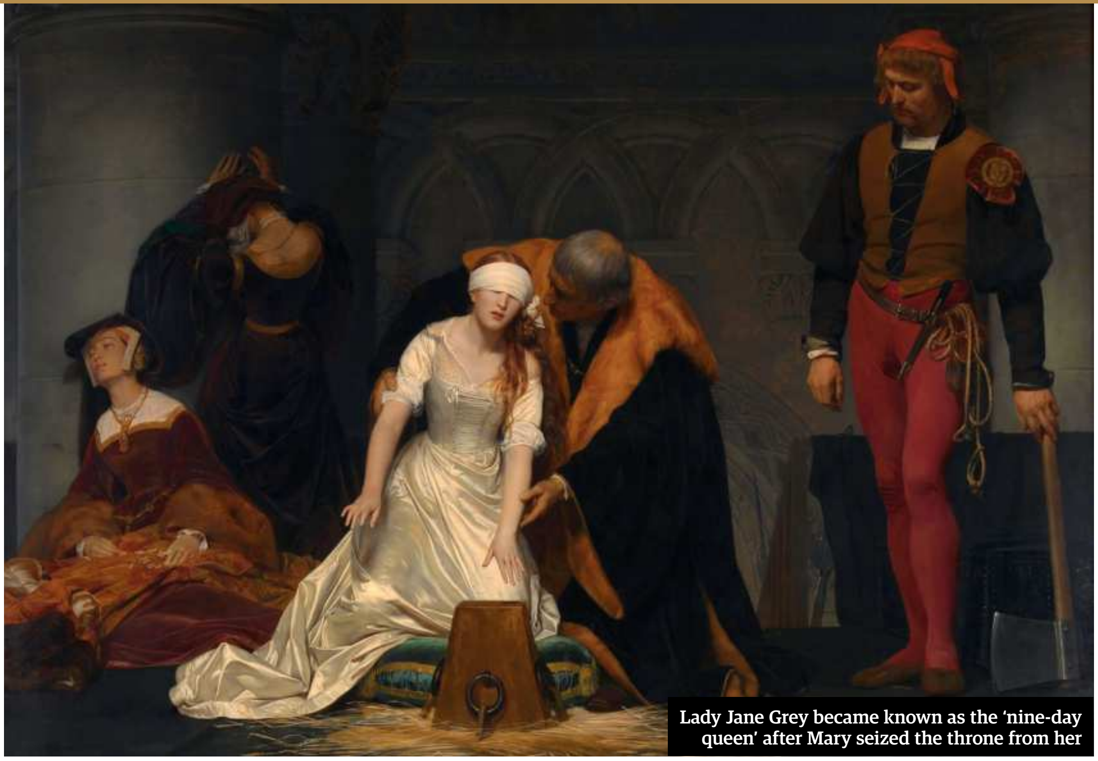
A bigger problem for Mary was the large number of evangelicals who had emigrated to Protestant states on the continent. For the most part they were merchants, landowners, members of aristocratic families – the sort of subjects the queen could ill afford to lose. At first she was glad to see them go, but it gradually became obvious that they were part of an international Protestant groundswell. In the face of this, Mary showed the same determination as her father to impose unity and uniformity on a fatally fractured society.

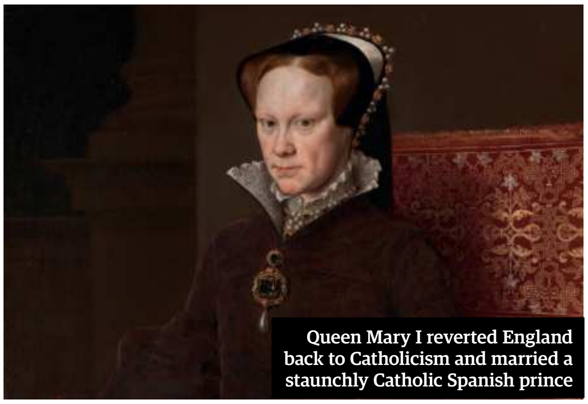
The work, the absence of Philip, who spent most of his time abroad, attending to his other political and military interests, and her mounting unpopularity took a toll on her physical and mental health. In November 1554, Mary announced that she was pregnant, the child supposedly due in May. By late July the queen had to concede that she was mistaken, and it's not difficult to imagine the sport her enemies had with her misadventure.

When Philip returned in March 1554 it was to demand financial and diplomatic support for his war with France, and this was exactly what opponents of the marriage had feared. Though warned against it by her whole Council, Mary gave her husband what he wanted – and he immediately left again. In the ensuing campaign Philip lost Calais, England's last continental foothold, to France. Meanwhile, Mary underwent a re-run of the fake-pregnancy farce. The public had little else to laugh at in a year of foul weather and poor harvests. On 17 November 1558, the queen died. Largely unmourned.

Elizabeth, the last of the Tudors, was also the most intellectually accomplished. She had shared many of Edward's humanist tutors and was a moderate Protestant, but as the daughter of the hated Anne Boleyn and the last remaining hope of anti-Catholic elements, her position was precarious during her half-sister's reign.

Elizabeth survived by keeping a low profile and by outwardly conforming to Mary's religion – largely, though not wholly, a matter of pragmatism. As Henry's daughter she believed implicitly in royal supremacy, and as Mary's subject it was her duty to accept the queen's religion. Elizabeth clung rigidly to this principle throughout her own long reign, and it was the length of her rule that finally settled England's destiny as the major Protestant nation in Europe.


Lady Jane Grey became known as the 'nine-day queen' after Mary seized the throne from her


Queen Mary I reverted England back to Catholicism and married a staunchly Catholic Spanish prince

> "MARY GAVE HER HUSBAND WHAT HE WANTED – AND HE IMMEDIATELY LEFT AGAIN"

Of course, no one in 1558 knew that the new queen would occupy the throne for four and a half decades, so her succession remained a perennial problem. Everyone assumed that Elizabeth would marry and provide the realm with an undisputed heir, and her councillors frequently urged her to select a suitable husband, but the queen staunchly resisted such pressure, insisting that marriage was her business and no one else's.

Elizabeth had learned from Mary's plight that marriage would inevitably mean loss of power. More than that: where should she look for a husband? If she chose within the realm, she would be encouraging rivalry between noble families, but taking a European prince would involve foreign policy implications.

Nonetheless, she did enter into a relationship with Robert Dudley, a son of the late Duke of Northumberland, a dashing, athletic extrovert who was something less than a lover and something more than a friend. One advantage of Dudley (created Earl of Leicester in 1564) was that he was married, so that there was no question of his becoming king in all but name. Therefore, when Robert's wife died in suspicious circumstances in 1560, Elizabeth found herself in the middle of a major crisis, but she rode it out and the two remained close for 30 years.

The next alarm came two years later: Elizabeth caught smallpox. For many days her attendants and councillors feared for her life. During her illness she commanded that, if she died, Dudley was to be nominated protector of the realm; the possibility greatly startled the queen's advisers and there were renewed pleas for her to marry. There were, perhaps, a couple of occasions when Elizabeth did consider a foreign liaison but nothing ever came of these and she found it expedient to cultivate the image of herself as the Virgin Queen, wedded to her people.

Throughout the years, the religious problem didn't go away - in fact, it became more complex. At the beginning of the reign, most of the migrants who had fled the Marian regime returned; several were appointed to bishoprics and other ecclesiastical posts, while others took up their places as leaders of rural society. They were all determined to secure the Protestant identity of England. But what kind of identity? They had returned from various continental states where different brands of reformed Christianity had been established, making for conflict over issues such as whether the ecclesiastical hierarchy of bishops and priests should be replaced by collegiate (Presbyterian) systems of ministers, and what kind of dress clergy should wear when conducting worship.

Elizabeth's preference was for reformed worship that allowed for an element of church ornamentation and elaborate sung worship - things dismissed by the more extreme Puritan party as the "dregs of popery". There was no question of allowing variety in doctrine, worship and church government; Elizabeth believed as staunchly as her father that the religion of her people was a matter of prerogative. She would establish it and she would demand at least an outward conformity on the part of all her subjects. In 1559, new Supremacy and Uniformity Acts were passed by parliament - but only after very animated debate. Elizabeth took the title 'Head' of the Church and her new Prayer Book was modelled on that of 1552 with some amendments to satisfy those of a more Catholic persuasion.

Like all compromises, not everyone was pleased, and the situation that developed during the reign was fractured. Staunch Catholics (recusants) continued to worship in secret, aided by priests smuggled in from the continent and dedicated to the reconversion of England. Within the official Church, conformist and Puritan factions confronted each other. By the end of the century, radical separatists had set up independent assemblies and had even begun to emigrate in order to enjoy freedom of worship.

Over the years, various plots and assassination attempts were made, particularly after 1570, when Pope Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth and declared that her subjects no longer owed her allegiance. Most attempts to dispose of Elizabeth were made in the interests of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, who had a claim to the throne, being directly descended from Henry VIII's sister, Margaret. Thanks to the efficient intelligence service run by Elizabeth's secretary, Sir Francis Walsingham, these plots were foiled, but the Council needed to be ever vigilant.

In 1587, Mary was put on trial for conspiracy to murder the queen, and it was her execution that sparked the sending of the great Spanish Armada, 1588. Philip II had long determined to bring about the reconversion of England and to set a member of his own family upon the throne. However, his complex invasion plan failed and though military action between Spain and England continued, the prospect of a Catholic comeback disappeared. When, in March 1603, Queen Elizabeth died, she was succeeded by Mary Stuart's son who was acceptable because he did not share his mother's religion. It had taken almost 80 years for the succession problem to be finally laid to rest.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF HENRY'S QUEENS

There are several places in England associated with the six wives of Henry VIII, many of which can still be visited today

Written by Melanie Clegg

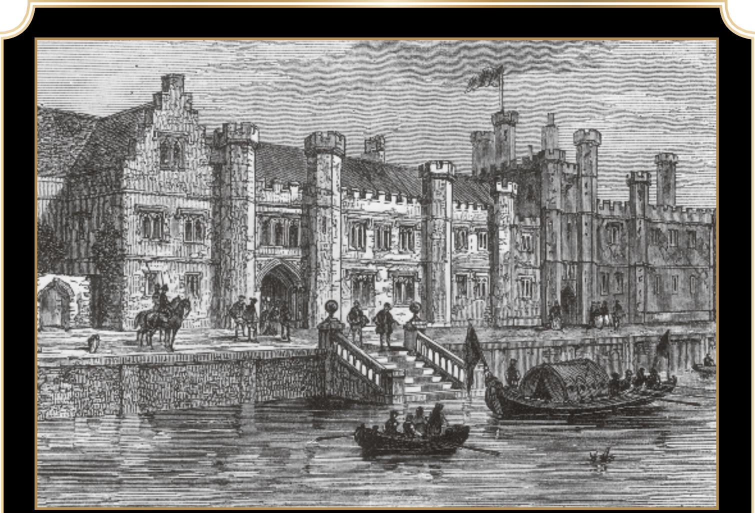
Ludlow Castle

Ludlow, Shropshire

Catherine of Aragon

SHROPSHIRE

In the 16th century, the now-ruined Ludlow Castle, which holds a strategic position close to the Welsh border in Shropshire, was the seat of the Council in the Marches of Wales and the most significant royal base in the area. In 1501, Prince Arthur and his new bride, Catherine of Aragon, were sent here shortly after their wedding and presided over a small court until Arthur's premature death less than a year later in April 1502, after which Catherine returned to London.



Greenwich Palace

London

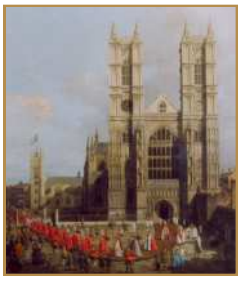
Catherine of Aragon & Anne Boleyn

Greenwich Palace was the main residence of the Tudor court for several decades after Henry VII rebuilt the old palace at the end of the 15th century and it was here that Henry VIII was born and spent much of his early reign. It was also the birthplace of his daughters, Mary I and Elizabeth I, as well as the location for his ill-fated wedding to Anne of Cleves in 1540. The palace fell into disrepair and was eventually demolished in the 17th century when the site was taken over by the Old Royal Naval College.

Westminster Abbey

London

Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn & Anne of Cleves

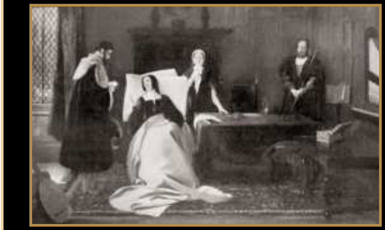


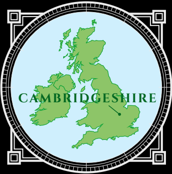
Westminster Abbey was the scene for some of the most magnificent state occasions of Henry VIII's reign, such as his joint coronation with Catherine of Aragon in June 1509 and the controversial crowning of the pregnant Anne Boleyn in June 1533. However, although the abbey had great significance to the Tudor dynasty, Henry chose to be buried elsewhere and the only one of his wives to be interred there was Anne of Cleves, who died in 1557. Henry's children Henry, Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I are all buried here.

Kimbolton Castle

Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire

Catherine of Aragon



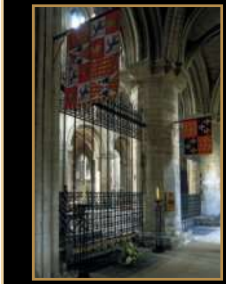


In May 1534, Catherine of Aragon was banished to Kimbolton Castle by Henry VIII as a punishment for refusing to grant him a divorce. It was a far cry from the luxurious royal palaces that Catherine was used to and her health and emotional wellbeing suffered grievously, especially as she was not allowed to see her daughter, Mary, before she died there in January 1536. The castle was extensively remodelled in the 18th century to become a fashionable mansion and is now a school.

Peterborough Cathedral

Peterborough, Cambridgeshire

Catherine of Aragon



CAMBRIDGESHIRE

When Catherine of Aragon died at Kimbolton Castle on 7 January 1536, it was decided that her remains should be interred at the nearby Peterborough Cathedral, one of the finest surviving examples of 12th century architecture. However, although her estranged husband agreed that she should have a state funeral, he refused to let their daughter Mary attend and stipulated that she should only be accorded the honours owed to a Princess of Wales rather than a Queen of England. Nowadays, her simple tomb is often covered in flowers left by well-wishers.

Blickling Hall

Blickling, Norfolk

Anne Boleyn

Although it is not known for certain where (or even exactly when) Anne Boleyn was born, many believe that the event occurred at Blickling Hall in Norfolk, which had been in the possession of her father's family since the mid-15th century. Legend has it that the headless ghost of Anne Boleyn visits Blickling every year on 19 May, the anniversary of her 1536 execution. Her father, Thomas, is also said to haunt the area.

Hever Castle

Hever, Kent

Anne Boleyn & Anne of Cleves

The charming moated castle and estate at Hever was acquired by the Boleyn family in the middle of the 15th century, passing into the hands of Sir Thomas, Anne Boleyn's father, in 1505. It was at Hever that Henry discreetly wooed Anne far from the eyes of his wife, Catherine of Aragon, and the rest of the court. The estate passed into Henry's possession after Anne's father died in 1539 – just in time for him to bestow it upon Anne of Cleves as part of her annulment settlement the following year.

Hampton Court Palace

East Molesey, Surrey

Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour & Catherine Howard

Wolsey's sumptuous personal residence passed into Henry VIII's hands when the cardinal fell from grace around 1528. Anne Boleyn was the first Queen to live there, but her apartments were not finished at the time of her execution so Jane Seymour was the first to enjoy them in their completed state, and Edward VI was later born there. A few years later, Hampton Court would be the scene for the dramatic arrest of Catherine Howard, whose ghost is said to haunt one of the galleries.

St George's Chapel

Windsor, Berkshire

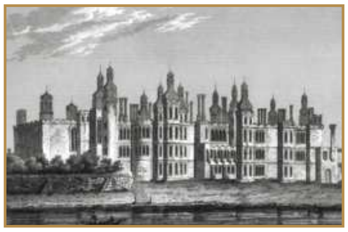
Jane Seymour

After Jane Seymour died at Hampton Court Palace in October 1537, her devastated husband retreated to Windsor Castle to mourn while her body lay in state in the Hampton Court Chapel Royal. On 12 November, her remains were taken in great state to Windsor Castle and buried in the crypt beneath St George's Chapel during an elaborate ceremony that emphasised the fact that, as mother to his heir, Jane was his one true queen. Henry would be placed beside her after his own death in 1547.

Richmond Palace

London

Catherine of Aragon & Anne of Cleves

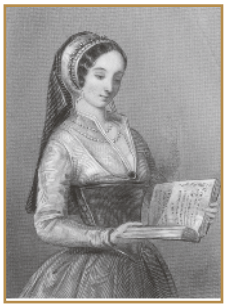


After a great fire destroyed a palace on the site, Henry VII decided to replace it with a majestic new residence that he named after his duchy of Richmond. Catherine of Aragon's second child, Henry, was born there on New Year's Day in 1511, but tragically died the following month. In 1540, Richmond Palace would form part of Anne of Cleves' annulment settlement and she would reside there with her household until it was returned to the crown. Much of the palace was demolished during the English Civil War.

Chesworth House

Horsham, Sussex

Catherine Howard



Chesworth House near Horsham in Sussex was one of several estates that belonged to the wealthy and influential Howard family during the 16th century. It was a favourite residence of the Dowager Duchess of Norfolk, whose large household included several children from aristocratic families. Among her charges were the children of her step-son, Edmund Howard, including the young Catherine Howard, whose life there would form a central part of the later accusations against her.

King's Manor

York, North Yorkshire

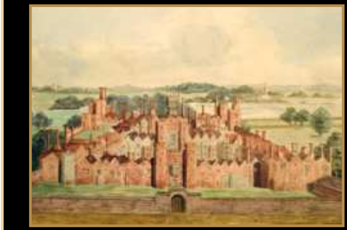
Catherine Howard

In June 1541, Henry VIII and Catherine Howard set out on the long journey north to York, where they planned to meet Henry's nephew, James V of Scotland, who annoyed Henry by not turning up. The couple visited several places along the way, culminating in a 12-day stay at the lovely King's Manor in the centre of York, which had been renovated specially for their visit. The building now forms part of the University of York's History department.

Oatlands Palace

Oatlands, Surrey

Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard & Catherine Parr

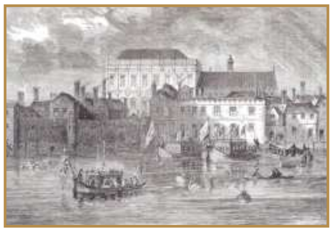


Henry VIII acquired the Oatlands estate in December 1537 and made it the focus of an extensive rebuilding project. It was intended to be a suitable residence for Henry's new wife, Anne of Cleves, but, after their marriage was annulled, he wed Catherine Howard in the chapel there on 28 July 1540. Oatlands Palace was also a favourite residence of Catherine Parr, who visited on more than one occasion after her marriage. The palace was sold and demolished in the 17th century – today, only a gate remains.

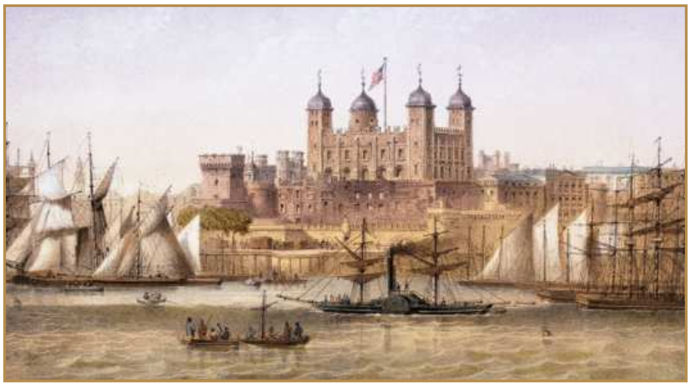
Whitehall Palace

London

Anne Boleyn & Jane Seymour



Originally known as York Place, this riverside palace was enlarged by Henry from 1530 onwards and considered to be his primary residence. It was the favourite palace of both Anne Boleyn, who secretly married Henry VIII there in 1533, and her successor, Jane Seymour, whose wedding took place there in 1536. Henry VIII would die in the king's apartments in Whitehall in January 1547. The great palace was mostly destroyed in a fire in 1698, with only the 17th-century Banqueting House surviving.



Tower of London

London

Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn & Catherine Howard

With its construction started by William the Conqueror in 1078, the Tower of London was one of the capital's most significant buildings in the 16th century. It now has a reputation for being a fearsome prison, but it was also a sumptuous royal residence. Both Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn spent the night there before their coronations and, in 1536, the latter would return to be executed there. Her cousin, Catherine Howard, also met her doom within the Tower's walls and the two beheaded queens would be buried close together in the Chapel Royal of St Peter ad Vincula at the Tower.

Rye House

Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire

Catherine Parr

HERTFORDSHIRE

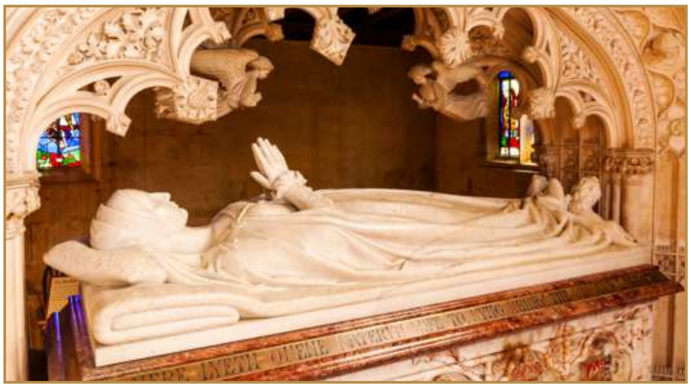
Constructed in the 1440s, Rye House was the main residence of the Parr family after Kendal Castle, their stronghold in Westmorland, fell into such disrepair that it was no longer comfortable. Although the family's roots were in the north, they had close links to the court and the location of Rye House meant that they were able to participate in court life. In the 19th century it became a workhouse, and later a tourist attraction with a maze and bowling green. Nowadays, only the grand gatehouse remains of the original building that Catherine Parr knew as a child.

Snape Castle

Snape, North Yorkshire

Catherine Parr

Snape Castle in North Yorkshire was built in the 15th century for George Neville, 1st Baron Latimer, by his father, the 1st Earl of Westmorland, and remained in the hands of the Latimer family until the end of the following century. In 1534, the widowed Catherine Parr married the 3rd Baron Latimer and the couple made Snape Castle their principal residence. It was at Snape Castle that Catherine and her step-children were held hostage during the 1537 Pilgrimage of Grace, until her husband returned from London and was able to negotiate their release.



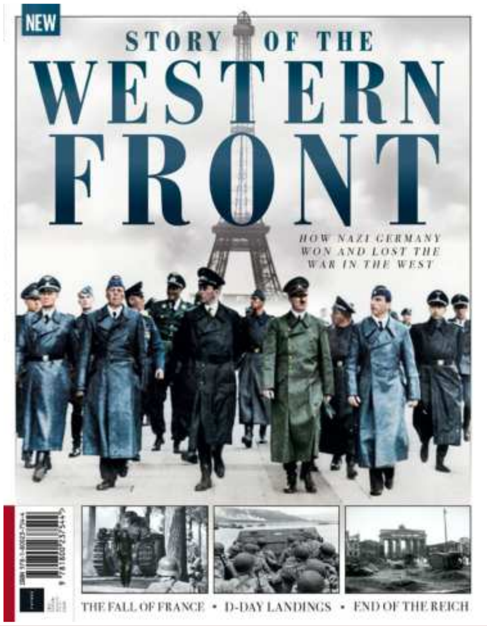
Sudeley Castle

Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

Catherine Parr

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

The beautiful castle at Sudeley became royal property in the middle of the 15th century, although, other than a brief visit by Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, it was usually left empty and neglected. Edward VI presented it to his uncle, Thomas Seymour, who married Catherine Parr in spring 1547. The couple moved there after Catherine announced her pregnancy and it was there that she gave birth to their daughter before dying in September 1548. Catherine was buried in the castle church with her ward, Lady Jane Grey, officiating as chief mourner.



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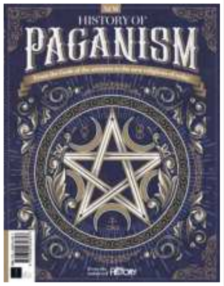

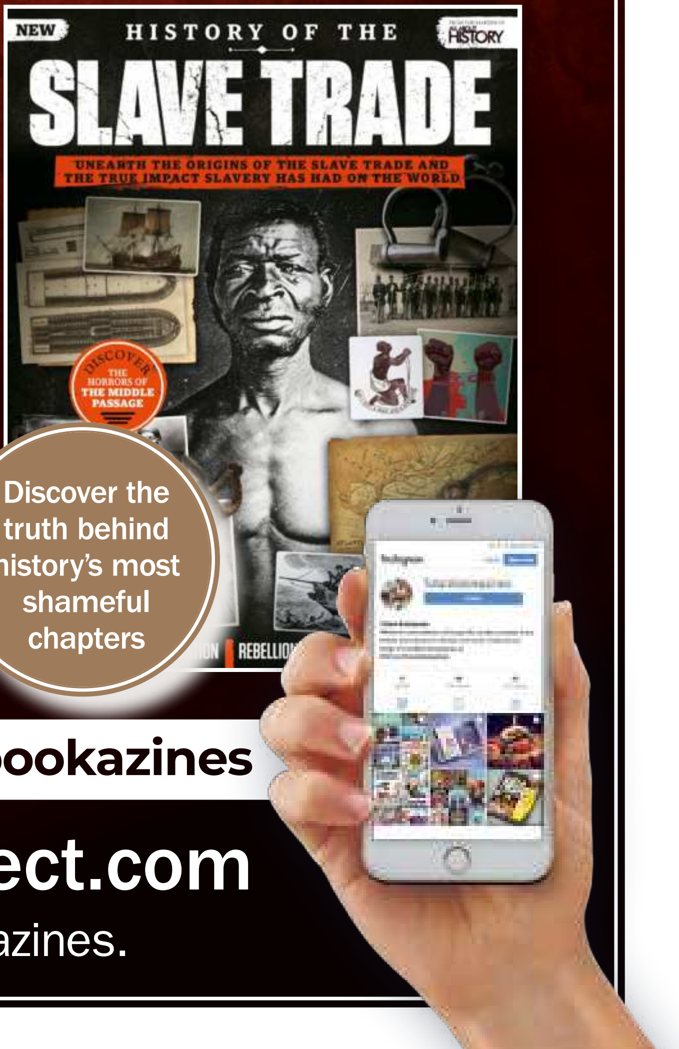

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ANNE BOLEYN
AND THE
SIX WIVES

The Six Wives

Catherine Versus Anne

CATHERINE VERSUS ANNE

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"By the time she was three years old, negotiations had already begun for her marriage to Arthur"

Cast aside, Catherine of Aragon fought back until her dying day

The six wives

Rise and fall of the Boleyns

RISE AND FALL OF THE BOLEYNS

Having a Boleyn mistress and then a Boleyn queen at the centre of power brought advantages, but royal favour had a nasty habit of morphing into ostracism – or a good deal worse – in Tudor England

"Thomas Boleyn was granted titles during his daughter Mary's sexual liaison with Henry"

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The Six Wives

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THE SEVENTH BRIDE

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